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Danish IT communication efforts in America and implications for public relations

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DANISH IT COMMUNICATION EFFORTS IN AMERICA
AND
IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of
Journalism and Mass Communication

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

By

Thomas Erik Nielsen

December 2003

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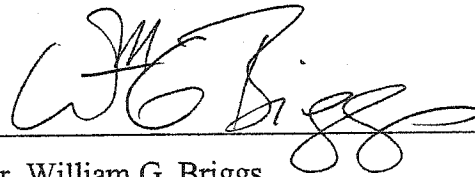
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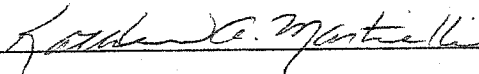
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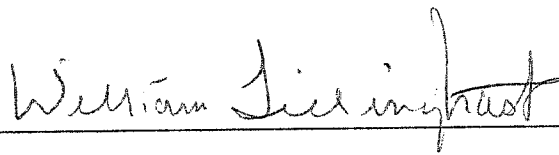
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "WGBriggs", written over a horizontal line.

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Dr. William Tillinghast

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ABSTRACT

DANISH IT COMMUNICATION EFFORTS IN AMERICA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

by Thomas Erik Nielsen

This thesis examines the cultural and market differences that exist between Denmark and the United States to determine how these differences may affect the communication efforts of Danish IT companies operating in the United States and what kinds of implications these results may have for the prospective public relations efforts of Danish IT companies. The results indicate that there are notable cultural and market differences between Denmark and the United States that can affect the communication efforts of Danish IT companies in America.

The research indicates the Danish rhetorical style in persuasive appeals must be more assertive than such appeals typically are in Denmark, and prospective public relations efforts will be more grounded in interpersonal communication versus mass communication. The research also suggests that Danish IT companies' current communication efforts may not be sufficient to resolve some of the communication challenges these companies are facing on the American market, and that public relations may be better suited for dealing with these challenges.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Denmark and the United States have long had an amiable and prosperous relationship. Many Danish immigrants have settled in the United States since the 19th century, particularly in the northern states of North Dakota, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and on the West coast in later years. By many accounts Americans of Danish descent constitute a body of souls greater than the population of Denmark, which stands at approximately 5.5 million people. Denmark is well known in the United States for its agricultural products, such as its Havarti cheese, pork products, and Carlsberg beer, and to a lesser degree, its products of design, such as its modern furniture and B&O electronics products. Denmark may be the only country that holds an official celebration on July 4th in honor of the United States' Independence Day. Throughout the Cold War, the United States had an important military base established at Thule in Greenland, and in 1999 when President Clinton visited Copenhagen, he was greeted by a sea of attentive Danes vigorously waving Danish and American flags. For all intents and purposes, Danes and Americans get along exceedingly well.

Nonetheless, the literature review will reveal that there *are* cultural differences between Denmark and the United States, perhaps even significant differences depending on the context and one's perspective. In Geert Hofstede's (1984) renowned study of cultural differences, Denmark ranked at the low extreme in three out of the four cultural variability indexes of Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and

Masculinity; in the one index where Denmark did not occupy the extreme end of the spectrum, namely Individualism, the United States occupied the high extreme and was ranked 1 (Hofstede, 1984). Moreover, in terms of individualism, the orientation of Denmark and the United States is different, the former being a horizontal individualist culture and the latter a vertical individualist culture (Triandis, 1995). Equality serves as the predominant value in one culture and freedom as the predominant value in the other. Still, Triandis (1995) wrote “that even vertical individualistic cultures are rather horizontal, because all individualistic cultures, relative to collectivistic cultures, are horizontal” (p. 46).

Certainly, differences exist between the Danish and U.S. cultures, but Triandis’ statement begs the question, do cultural differences have any perceptible consequences during interactions and relations between these two Western cultures?

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to examine this very general question in a specific area of interaction between Denmark and the United States that is applicable to mass communication research. The focus of research will be Danish Information Technology companies operating in the United States and the nature of their efforts to communicate with an American audience, be it consumer, business, or the general public. Interviews with Danish IT professionals will be conducted through the auspices of the Trade Commission of Denmark in San Jose as part of a collaborative research project focusing on the communication and business strategies of Danish IT companies in the United

States. Although technology is often perceived as calculated, practical, and mathematical in nature, even the emotionless construct of technology requires that people (innovators) persuade other people (consumers) to use this technology, and all people exist in socio-cultural contexts. As Hofstede (2001) wrote—in what seems both highly applicable and not a little ironic for the current situation—people are *programmed* with cultural values from birth. Given the common impression of information technology as dry and analytical, this may be the best place to study the effects of cultural differences given that the expectation for cultural impact in this context may be low or negligible.

This thesis will strive to apply the theories of Hofstede (1984, 2001) and Triandis (1995) concerning cultural variability to the context of Danish IT companies in the United States. In a context where culture may be perceived as having little effect, awareness of cultural differences may be low and the need to take cultural differences into account in the process of communication may go unrecognized, regardless of whether there is a need. If an awareness of cultural differences can be established, an attempt will be made to define the nature of those differences and examine the correlation of these observations with the aforementioned theories concerning cultural differences. If Danish IT communicators do indeed acknowledge cultural differences, have these communicators deemed it necessary to accommodate the cultural distinctions of the United States and adapted their communication efforts to these distinctions? As such, have efforts to adjust Danish IT communications for cultural differences yielded positive, negative, or negligible results? Similarly, has an absence of adaptation and accommodation had an effect on communication efforts?

This thesis will attempt to explore these questions through the application of Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) approach to intercultural communication and Ellingsworth's (1988) theory of adaptive intercultural communication. However, beyond the kinds of cultural differences described by Hofstede (1984, 2002) and Triandis (1995) and potential adjustments for these differences, the intercultural communication and adaptation theories will also be applied in a more general way toward the communication efforts of Danish IT companies in the United States. Do these companies use different communication strategies and/or tactics in the United States than they would in Denmark? Are there other factors beyond cultural differences that have an impact on their communications? The point of such questions and a broader application of these theories will be to tease out the adjustments Danish communicators have made, for whatever reason, while operating in the United States. By doing so, the opportunities improve for generating useful information that can be applied in the final analysis of this thesis.

Much of this research was inspired by an observation made by the Trade Commissioner of Denmark, Kim Nielsen. The Trade Commissioner noted that, as far as he could ascertain, Danish IT companies are not particularly adept at creating publicity about themselves and their products in the United States. Consequently, this thesis will attempt to apply the aforementioned theories of cultural variability and intercultural communication in concert with international public relations theory, which will draw on the research and theoretical discussions of Sriramesh and White (1992), Verčič, Grunig, and Grunig (1996), Zaharna (2001), and Vasquez and Taylor (1999). Based on such a

framework, the researcher will make reasoned predictions regarding the consequences of culture and the efforts of current Danish IT communication efforts on prospective public relations strategies for Danish IT companies.

Significance of Research

From a theoretical standpoint, this thesis offers 1) an opportunity to test the applicability of intercultural communication propositions, which generally focus on interpersonal settings, in a broader business communications perspective and 2) an opportunity to examine the theoretical implications of incorporating intercultural communication and public relations. As of yet, there does not appear to be a great deal of exploration in this aspect of communication research, intercultural-, mass-, or otherwise. However, as Gudykunst (2002, p. 45) wrote, “There is . . . a need for more theories linking specific communication processes to dimensions of cultural variability and individual-level factors that mediate their effects.”

Similarly, from a practical standpoint, publicity and its vehicle of creation, public relations, seems an unexplored and/or underutilized strategy of communication for Danish IT organizations operating in the United States. In truth, many Danish IT companies and start-ups may not be at that point in their development where it is feasible to implement a strategic public relations plan. This does not mean, however, that the need is not there or will not be there at some point in the future. Consequently, the research conducted in this thesis may offer some insight that will prove beneficial should

the need or desire arise for the implementation of public relations strategy for Danish IT firms.

Overview of Procedures

This thesis will be exploratory in nature. There are a number of unknowns constituting the context of this research that require elucidation, and therefore exploration, before attempting the immediate application of pertinent theories to a problem statement. Cultural differences between Denmark and the United States have been described by Hofstede (1984) and others, but research regarding the effects of these differences upon communication has not surfaced. The nature of Danish IT communication efforts is similarly unexplored, which is probably attributable to relatively recent emergence of widespread high technology industries.

The research will be qualitative, focusing on the analysis of in-depth interviews with Danish high tech professionals operating in the United States. This approach seems most appropriate, as it will allow the researcher to tap into a body of collective knowledge acquired from extensive personal and professional experience in another culture. The information gleaned from these interviews will be examined in conjunction with the research and theories detailed in the literature review in an effort to achieve satisfactory data triangulation.

Research Limitations

This research is limited to the specifically defined area of Danish IT business communication, and as such, one may not be able to generalize the findings of this thesis to communication efforts in other areas of Danish business in the United States.

Additionally, because of the qualitative nature of the study, it will not be possible to draw statistical conclusions from the evidence or make predictions based on statistical evidence.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The literature review will cover three areas of research relevant to Danish high-tech communication efforts in the United States and possible implications for public relations strategy. The three areas of research are: cultural variability, intercultural communication, and international public relations.

A discussion on cultural variability will establish the context for this research, namely that differences exist between cultures, even between two Western cultures such as Denmark and the United States. This discussion will begin by examining the dimensions of cultural variability as set forth by Geert Hofstede (1984, 2001) and the horizontal and vertical dimensions of individualism and collectivism as described by Harry C. Triandis (1995). Before one can examine the success or failure of communication efforts in a cross-cultural setting, it is necessary to elaborate upon the cultural differences that may exist.

Construction of an analytical framework that can be applied toward the effects of culture upon communication will incorporate William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim's (1997) approach to intercultural communication and Huber W. Ellingsworth's (1988) theory of adaptive intercultural communication. Such a framework will lend itself to an examination of the possible effects of culture on Danish communication efforts in the United States and the success and failure of current communication efforts.

A quick review of effective public relations and a more thorough review of international public relations theory will comprise the second stage of the theoretical framework, and will draw upon the work of James E. Grunig et al. (1992), Sriramesh and White (1992), Verčič, Grunig, and Grunig (1996), Zaharna (2001), and Vasquez and Taylor (1999). The research and theoretical discussion in this section of the literature review will gather the previous discussions on cultural variability and intercultural communication into a PR perspective. All of these elements, then, in concert with the empirical research data will help identify many of the factors that will influence prospective public relations strategies for Danish IT companies in the United States.

The literature review will conclude with four **research questions** that will guide the aforementioned research and theoretical literature in an empirical study.

Cultural Variability

Culture. Before beginning a discussion of cultural variability, it should be noted that definitions of culture are numerous. Hofstede (1984, p. 21), for example, defined culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. . . . Culture, in this sense, includes systems of values; and values are among the building blocks of culture.” McCracken (1990) described culture, first, as a lens through which all things are seen and, second, as a blueprint for human activity. Brislin (1993), on the other hand, showed a certain degree of reservation about giving a definition for culture, but said nonetheless that culture is composed of ideals and values that are shared and guide behavior, that culture is created

by people, that it is passed along from generation to generation and is learned from the early stages of childhood. The use of a particular definition for culture often seems to be influenced a great deal by the task at hand. Hofstede (1984, 2001) was concerned with the effects of culture on organizations and in the workplace environment, and so it is interesting, purely in semantic terms, how much Hofstede's definition reflects the case study organization he was examining, namely IBM. McCracken (1990) wrote about the degree to which people communicate who they are through their consumption, which is shaped by how they perceive the world; hence, the metaphor of a lens. This thesis will view culture primarily from the perspectives of researchers like Hofstede and McCracken, since the nature of how Danes communicate to Americans will also be defined by their perception of themselves, the United States, and Americans. Brislin's (1993) discussion on culture is also helpful, because it describes how culture comes to exist and all the different factors that influence culture. Culture is more than just a collection of definitions, it is many things and highly subjective. Researchers are well served by not forgetting the ambiguous qualities of culture.

Dimensions of Culture. Hofstede (1984) is widely considered the seminal writer on the differences that exist between cultures. His study, first published in 1980, focused on the degrees of difference between 40 countries and was comprised of over 100,000 respondents from the multinational firm, IBM (Jandt, 2001). In his study, Hofstede established the nature of the differences between these 40 countries by creating categories by which these countries could be compared, which he called the dimensions of culture (Hofstede, 2001). These dimensions were originally established as Power Distance,

Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism, and Masculinity (Hofstede, 1984). In 1980 Hofstede created a fifth dimension, Confucian dynamism, which was established from a Chinese perspective to mediate the potential for western bias in the original dimensions of culture (Gudykunst, 2002). In the second edition of *Culture's Consequences*, Hofstede (2001) refined two of the original dimensions of culture and the fifth dimension, as well, changing individualism to individualism and collectivism, masculinity to masculinity and femininity, and Confucian Dynamism to long-term and short-term. This literature review will not cover Hofstede's fifth dimension, long- versus short-term orientation, since Denmark is not included in that study and the primary focus of the study is on establishing a dimensional perspective from east to west. The focus of this thesis is a west-to-west dimensional perspective.

The scope of Hofstede's (1984, 2001) research, his thoroughness, and the voluminous empirical evidence for his conclusions give the reader a good impression for why Hofstede's work remains instrumental in cross-cultural research today. However, the work is not without its critics. Voronov and Singer (2002) stated in their opening line of a recent article on Hofstede's research: "When a whole culture or society is pigeonholed in dichotomous categories (e.g., masculine-feminine, active-passive, or loose-tight), subtle differences and qualitative nuances that are more characteristic of that social entity may be glossed over" (p. 461). In their article, Voronov and Singer are primarily concerned with the dimension of individualism and collectivism, a dimension that receives considerable attention in this literature review. Consequently, following an

examination of Hofstede's dimensions of culture, the criticism of Voronov and Singer, along with others, will be taken into consideration.

Power Distance. Power distance describes the balance of influence that exists between two people. Hofstede (2001) defined power distance in the following way:

The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behavior of S and the extent to which S can determine the behavior of B (p. 83).

In cultures of high power distance, authority is more visible, more accepted and less challenged on a personal level, whereas in a cultures of low power distance, the authority is less noticeable and subject to discussion and negotiation. Hofstede's (2001) Power Distance Index Values ranged from a high of 104 to a low of 11 with a median of 57, a mean of 51, and a standard deviation of 22. On this scale the United States ranked at 40, within the middle area of the scale, but nonetheless a moderately low power distance ranking, whereas Denmark ranked at 18, representing the very low end of the power distance scale (Hofstede, 2001). High power distance cultures hold relatively authoritarian values, feel that people should try to look as powerful as possible, and feel that most people should be dependent in society, while a few maintain independence; low power distance cultures hold relatively unauthoritarian values, feel that people should try to look less powerful than they are, and consider people to be interdependent (Hofstede, 2001). Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (1993, p. 242), in discussing Swedish society (to which a reasonable comparison can be made based on the proximity of Sweden and Denmark on Hofstede's scale), wrote that Swedes "exceed Americans in their readiness to dispute with their boss if they believe he is wrong." Power distance is also evident in

schooling systems, where the level of deference is noticeable (Hofstede, 2001). Although the United States and Denmark both rate low on the power distance index, deference distance is something that is immediately apparent to Danish and American exchange students studying in the opposite culture. Whereas Danish students are accustomed to addressing their instructors on a first name basis from kindergarten through a university education, American students are more accustomed to addressing their instructors as Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Jones in grade school and high school and as Professor Smith or Dr. Smith during their university education.

Uncertainty Avoidance. Hofstede (2001) described uncertainty as a central element of human life. Humans do not know the nature of the universe, beyond various religious and spiritual determinations and scientific hypotheses. People can plan for tomorrow, but people do not know with certainty what tomorrow will bring. Hofstede (2001) wrote that all human societies have created ways to deal with uncertainty, chief among these are technology, law, and religion. He continued, "Technology has helped us to defend ourselves against uncertainties caused by nature; law, to defend against uncertainties in the behavior of others; religion, to accept the uncertainties we cannot defend ourselves against" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 146). Moreover, the ways in which societies cope with uncertainty, Hofstede (2001, p. 146) wrote, "belong to the cultural heritages of societies." Hofstede's (2001) Uncertainty Avoidance Index Values ranged from a high of 112 for Greece to a low of 8 for Singapore with a median value score of 65, a mean of 64, and a standard deviation of 23. On this scale Denmark and the United States ranked below the median again, but once again the United States occupied a

ranking closer to the middle with a value score of 46, whereas Denmark occupied the low end of the scale with a value score of 23 (Hofstede, 2001). High uncertainty cultures have tendencies toward reading fewer books and newspapers, a weak interest in politics, the strong appeal of right-wing politics, and worrying about the future; low uncertainty cultures have tendencies toward reading more books and newspapers, an interest in politics, the weak appeal of right-wing politics, and living day by day (Hofstede, 2001). The varying degrees to which Denmark and the United States may or may not fall in such categories indicate undoubtedly how a culture can vary within any particular dimension and how societal values and norms are affected by other factors, as well, including other dimensions of cultural variability.

Individualism and Collectivism. Hofstede's (2001) third dimension of culture is an examination of the extent to which people consider themselves independent of their socio-cultural environment and the degree to which people feel a part of the collectivity of their culture and society. Hofstede (2001, p. 210) wrote, "The central element in our mental programming involved in this case is the self-concept." Similarly, Triandis (1995) argued that a person's perception of the nature of independence versus interdependence is fundamental to the respective concepts of individualism and collectivism. The dimension of individualism and collectivism has become an important concept in social psychology and comparative analyses of different cultures, and it will also figure prominently in this literature review. In Hofstede's (1984, 2001) study both Denmark and the United States are identified as particularly individualistic societies, although the United States tops the index as the most individualistic country in

Hofstede's survey. In individualistic societies emphasis is placed on freedom and challenge in jobs, an "I" consciousness, individual-based identity, autonomy, and individual financial security; in collectivistic cultures emphasis is placed on skills and job training, a "We" consciousness, social system-based identity, duty, and security provided by an organization or clan (Hofstede, 2001).

Triandis (1995) expanded on individualism and collectivism by defining two types of each, horizontal individualism/vertical individualism and horizontal collectivism/vertical collectivism. Much as Hofstede (2001) stressed the importance of self-concept, Triandis (1995) wrote that there are four kinds of self, independent and interdependent, same and different. The independent same self and independent different self represent horizontal and vertical individualism respectively, whereas the interdependent same self and interdependent different self represent horizontal and vertical collectivism respectively (Triandis, 1995). The vertical dimensions are marked by an acceptance of inequality and privileges; the horizontal dimensions are marked by an emphasis on similarity between people, particularly with regard to status (Triandis, 1995). This literature review is primarily concerned with horizontal individualism and vertical individualism, since current literature points to these dimensions as the predominant characterizations of Denmark and the United States. Both types of individualism value self-reliance. However, a desire to achieve status and attention and an aversion for being average characterize vertical individualistic cultures and the United States; whereas social status is not as coveted, and inconspicuousness is considered a

more favorable attribute in horizontal individualistic cultures and Denmark (Triandis, 1995).

Nelson and Shavitt (2002) applied the polar concepts of horizontal and vertical individualism in a comparative study of achievement and related values in the United States and Denmark. The study was comprised of qualitative in-depth interviews and structured questionnaires from which responses were quantitatively tallied. In the study both Danes and Americans chose family, friends, and/or lovers as their first source of happiness. Thereafter, the Danes expressed happiness in terms of communing with nature, whereas the Americans expressed happiness in terms of goals and achievement (Nelson and Shavitt, 2002). When asked about the future, Americans spoke of a good job or career, marriage, children, and owning a business—which seemed to connote freedom for the Americans; the Danes talked about family and children, a job that would make them happy, a relaxing life, and a house in the country (Nelson and Shavitt, 2002). In the quantitative questionnaires, Americans were found again to rate achievement, power, success, ambition, capability, and influence value types higher in importance than the Danes, who rated protecting the environment, world beauty, unity with nature, social-justice, wisdom, equality, and world peace value types higher in importance (Nelson and Shavitt, 2002).

Nelson and Shavitt's study seems to show that the horizontal and vertical individualism dimension is an adequate construct for accessing cultural differences between Danes and Americans. It is also noteworthy that the comparisons used in the study are positive/positive, which is important not because it reflects optimism, but rather

consistency. Nelson and Shavitt might also have compared Americans and Danes on egomania: American narcissism and Danish self-importance. Hofstede (1984, 2001) does not always make these consistent distinctions. Under a chart comparing religion and ideas for individualistic cultures, Hofstede (2001, p. 251) compared the following definitions: “Individualism is good” versus “Placing individual over collective interests is evil.” Although, these definitions may represent cultural perceptions, writing *placing collective over individual interest is good* would have led to a more balanced comparison. Doing so will help avoid the appearance of bias that leaves a researcher open to criticism.

Masculinity and Femininity. The fourth dimension of Hofstede’s original study is masculinity and femininity, which also illustrates differences between the United States and Denmark. On the index of masculinity values, the United States has a moderate masculine rating of 62, while Denmark has a particularly feminine rating of 16 (Hofstede, 2001). Masculine cultures value work related recognition and challenges, individual decisions, and consider work as central in a person’s life, whereas feminine cultures value cooperation, group decisions, and generally do not value work as central in a person’s life (Hofstede, 2001). Masculine societal norms emphasize ego orientation, money, material objects, and what one does, whereas feminine societal norms emphasize relationship orientation, quality of life, people, and the nature of being, rather than doing. Hofstede (2001) has asserted that “the ind/col and mas/fem dimensions are statistically wholly independent” (p. 293). The correlation between the values expressed in Nelson and Shavitt’s study and masculine and feminine values seems significant. Further

research might be conducted on the degree to which horizontal and vertical individualism is influenced by masculine and feminine cultural orientations or vice a versa.

Integrating criticism. Despite empirical evidence and well-reasoned descriptions of cultural dimensions, Hofstede (1984, 2001) and Triandis (1995), as previously alluded, do encounter opposition to their theories and research. Hermens and Kempen (1998) wrote:

Globalization involves social processes that are complex and laden with tension. These processes fall squarely outside the scope of cultural dichotomies, which by their nature are oversimplifying and insensitive to the apparent tensions that are so typical of the relationships between cultural groups. (p. 1113)

Essentially, the weakness of cultural dimensions, as implied by Hermens and Kempen (1998) and the earlier quote by Voronov and Singer (2002), is that cultural dimensions reduce people and cultures to categorized generalizations that are ineffective in understanding complex cultural differences. However, the dimensions described by Hofstede and Triandis should not be viewed as rigid categories, which represent definitive end-states. Rather, these dimensions offer telescopic tools by which the researcher can isolate the nuances of culture, specifically the values inherent in different cultures and the graduations of values shared by cultures, much as Nelson and Shavitt (2002) have done in their study on Denmark and the United States. Hofstede (1984, p. 212) cautioned, “The four dimensions, however, are not necessarily exhaustive; they do not represent the final word on dimensions of national culture.” The proper explication of cultural nuance is the onus of the researcher. The assumption in this thesis will be that the dimensions described by Hofstede (1984, 2001) remain useful and applicable, and can

lead to the elucidation of cultural differences, but that one must also be aware that increasing cultural interaction makes cultural distinctions fluid.

Intercultural Communication.

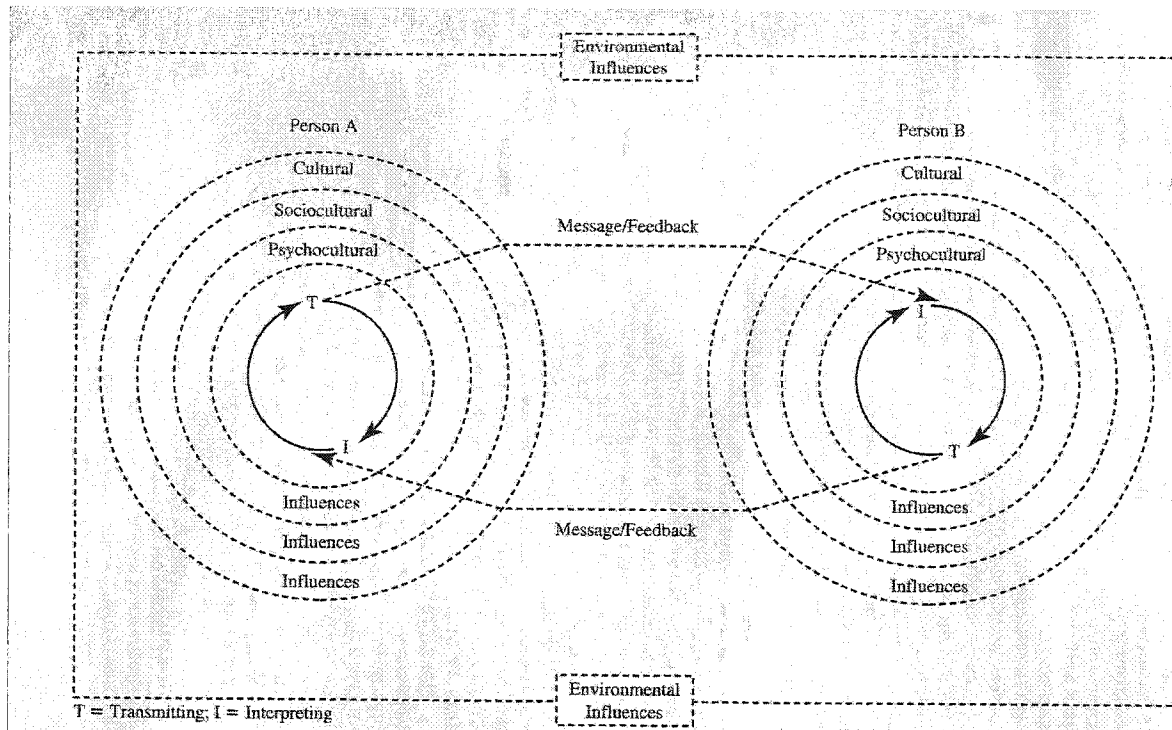
Having examined the way in which cultures may differ from each other on the basis of Hofstede's (1984, 2001) cultural dimensions, the discussion can now turn toward the influence of culture upon communication and the process of communicating cross culturally. The discussion will begin with an analysis of Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) model for studying communication between strangers, which will provide some insight into how culture affects communication. The discussion will then shift to Ellingsworth's (1988) theory of adaptive intercultural communication, which focuses on the process of task completion and the minimization of cultural differences in communication. Throughout the discussion, Hofstede's (1984, 2001) research on cultural variability and Brislin's (1981, 1986, 1993) research on cultural interaction and behavior will be incorporated into the analysis.

Cultural Influences on Communication. Communication is, among many things, a symbolic process that involves the creation of meaning and occurs at different levels of awareness (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Communication is symbolic by virtue of a culture's tendency to produce symbols that are recognized by its members and to which members ascribe a general meaning (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Symbols encompass words, national products, flags, and all things that are recognized by a culture and communicate meaning; symbols can change, can disappear over time, and can be can

adopted by other cultures (Hofstede, 2001). This does not mean symbols provide the same meaning for people, even people of the same culture: Coca Cola may be a symbol of Americana for some and cultural imperialism for others, but most will recognize it as distinctly American. Although messages can be transmitted easily from one person to another, the meanings people ascribe to messages will often be different (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Mental programming often creates new meaning based on symbolic references, experiences, and perceptions that are different for the message receiver than the sender (Hofstede, 2001). Communication occurs at different levels of awareness, since the process of communication (how people communicate, to whom they communicate, response expectations, etc.) is learned unconsciously since childhood (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Many of the behaviors people learn during childhood, consciously or unconsciously, are those considered acceptable and relevant to the pervasive cultural context (Brislin, 1993). As a result, much communicative behavior is internalized and occurs at a level of low awareness; however, in unfamiliar situations, such as different cultural contexts, awareness is heightened and can either facilitate or hinder communication (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) described the communication that occurs between cultures as communication between strangers. Gudykunst and Kim (1997, p. 27) defined strangers as “those people in relationships where there is a relatively high degree of strangeness and a relatively low degree of familiarity.” Gudykunst and Kim’s model for communication between strangers (Figure 1) is composed of two people sending and receiving messages and feedback surrounded by environmental influences. Environment

Figure 1



An organizing model for studying communication with strangers

Source: Communicating with Strangers: An approach to Intercultural communication,

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(location, climate, setting, etc.) can influence the communication process, although not nearly as powerfully as what Gudykunst and Kim (1997, p. 44) referred to as a person's "conceptual filters." These conceptual filters are comprised of 3 spheres, the outermost defined as cultural influences, the next as sociocultural influences and the last as psychocultural influences; within these concentric spheres of influence lies the interactive process of interpreting and transmitting messages (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

Cultural influences on communication consist of the differences that exist between cultures, such as those described by Hofstede (1984, 2001) and Triandis (1995). Gudykunst and Kim (1997) noted: "It is important to recognize that communication is unique within each culture and, at the same time, that systematic similarities and differences exist" (p. 54). Conceivably, the extent to which Danish and American cultures are similar, for example, may readily facilitate cross-cultural expeditions of business, diplomacy, travel, and education between these two countries. However, the initial success of such ventures could leave Danes and Americans unprepared for cultural differences, and taking cultural similarities between the two countries for granted may create a condition of low-awareness that can lead to misunderstanding when different communicative styles emerge. Nelson and Shavitt (2002), in the beginning of their study, compared two beers slogans from the United States and Denmark, in which an American brewer claimed to be #1 whereas a Danish brewer claimed that its beer was *probably* the best beer in town. Nelson and Shavitt (2002) pointed out that the American company reflected the achievement values of the United States and the Danish company reflected the Danish inclination toward modesty. Communicating modesty in a business

environment in the United States might not always be viewed positively in US competitive culture and could lead to rejection, be it on a personal level, business level, or mass audience level. Greater awareness of such a cultural difference might allow a Danish communicator to make adjustments, but overcompensating for this difference could also lead to problems—the communication of overconfidence. This hypothetical example illustrates how graduations of cultural difference may have an effect on the communication process.

Sociocultural influences, the second of the three conceptual filters defined by Gudykunst and Kim (1997), describe the impact membership in social groups can have on communication—the nation represents the largest membership group in which people can belong. Those people not belonging to an individual's membership group, are generally categorized as belonging to an outgroup (Triandis, 1995). Brislin (1986) noted: "People use categorization to deal effectively and efficiently with the complexity of their world" (p. 305). Consequently, it is not uncommon for people to define their own culture as an ingroup and other cultures as outgroups in cross-cultural interactions (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). The consequences for communication are clear, Gudykunst and Kim (1997, p. 87) noted, since "the tendency is for us to judge the behavior of people in the other culture (the outgroup) in terms of our own cultural standards." The Danes, by many accounts, are very conscious of their membership in the sociocultural context of the Danish nation, which can probably be ascribed, among many reasons, to small size of the country. Americans, on the other hand, Gudykunst and Kim (1997) noted, may not

identify with being members of their culture so strongly before they have visited another country.

Psychoculture influences concern the psychological factors that influence the expectations an individual has when communicating with people from other cultures (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Stereotyping is a common psychocultural construct that allows people to categorize other people. Brislin (1986, p. 307) observed: "One reason why stereotypes exist is that they enable the acquisition of much information in a short period of time. In a difficult or unsure situation . . . , it is tempting to grasp for information that will help people make appropriate interpretations." Gudykunst and Kim (1997) noted that, although using a stereotype increases one's confidence in predicting the behavior of people from other cultures, it does not increase the accuracy of those predictions. Hofstede (2001) argued that information about a population can only be considered valid under four conditions: it is descriptive, not evaluative; verifiable from more than one independent source; applicable to at least a statistical majority; and indicative of those characteristics that make the culture in question different from others. Stereotypes often influence our communication with people from other cultures. To the degree that these stereotypes are accurate, our communications will be successful. However, a tendency toward stereotyping generally causes people to misinterpret the behavior of others, which can lead to misunderstanding between people of different cultures.

Effective Intercultural Communication. In the previous section, Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) model for communication between strangers was examined to define the

consequences of culture upon communication. This section will review the factors that contribute to effective communication across different cultures through an examination of Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) components of perceived competence. It will conclude with a set of theoretical propositions from Ellingsworth's (1988) theory of adaptive intercultural communication that can be used to validate the effectiveness of Gudykunst and Kim's components as well as the adaptive behaviors and strategies of Danish IT communicators in the United States.

In terms of cross-cultural communication, communicating effectively involves the reduction of misunderstanding (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Nevertheless, Gudykunst and Kim (1997, p. 252) wrote: "Communicating effectively and appropriately are important aspects of being perceived as a competent communicator. We can, however, communicate effectively and not be perceived as a competent communicator." This quote hearkens to the earlier discussion on adaptation to cultural difference and overcompensation for cultural difference. The initiator of communication may perceive adaptation to cultural differences as effective, but unless the communication receiver also perceives these adaptive efforts as effective, the communicator will remain ineffective. Ellingsworth (1988) defined adaptive behavior as "any attempt to accommodate substantively and behaviorally to the perceived foreignness of the other participant" (p. 264). An individual's skills as a communicator will not guarantee that he or she will be perceived as competent, but those skills will increase the probability that such an individual can adapt his or her behavior so that he or she is perceived as competent (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) defined the components of perceived competence as motivation, knowledge, and skills. The motivation to communicate with others cross-culturally is determined by basic needs, which consist of a need for predictability, a need to diffuse anxiety and a need to sustain self-conceptions. In an intercultural setting, a person's inability to predict how other people will respond is reduced and can also lead to anxiety. Consequently, motivation for communicating with others cross-culturally is dependent upon a person's ability to manage feelings of anxiety and the need for predictability (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Those people who have cultural flexibility as a trait are better equipped to deal with lack of predictability and the corresponding anxiety (Brislin, 1993). Maintaining self-conception in a cross-cultural situation can be aided by being mindful that culturally different communicators often perceive the concept of self differently (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Horizontal individualists will typically have a concept of self that is independent but the same as others, whereas vertical individuals will typically have a concept that is independent but different from others (Triandis, 1995).

Knowledge, the second component of perceived competence, is characterized by awareness of what makes communication effective in cross-cultural settings (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). One can gain knowledge about the nature of communication in another culture by passively observing, actively researching, or directly interacting with the culture in question (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Fostering enthusiasm in oneself for engaging other cultures can facilitate cultural interaction; this requires focusing on opportunities for learning, rather than a fear of the unknown (Brislin, 1993).

Understanding differences between cultures is important, since not all differences can be overcome, but must be accommodated; however, gaining a sense of personal similarities is critical to establishing a rapport with a person from another culture (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Finally, one can enhance awareness by recognizing that there are various ways to interpret communication (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) identified the ability to be mindful, to tolerate ambiguity, to calm ourselves, to empathize, to adapt our behavior, and to make accurate predictions and explanations as skills of communicating effectively across cultures. Being mindful is perhaps the most important and consists of being cognitively aware that one is communicating and operating in another culture (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). This requires being attentive to other ways of thinking, different ways for conveying emotion or feelings, as well as cultural and personal specific behavior (Brislin, 1993). Hofstede (2001) wrote that low uncertainty avoidance cultures have a higher mental tolerance for ambiguity, but that high uncertainty avoidance cultures may be better equipped to cope with ambiguity at a physical level (e.g., the body may be able tolerate higher levels of stress). Both low uncertainty cultures and high uncertainty cultures have developed strategies for reducing anxiety or calming oneself, for example, being controlled versus being expressive (Hofstede, 2001). The propriety of one way or the other is entirely dependent on the culture. Brislin (1983, 1993) defined creativity and a willingness to communicate in different ways as effective methods for adapting to cross-cultural situations. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) like Brislin (1993) defined flexibility as a key component of cross-cultural adaptation: this requires the accommodation of cultural

differences, learning other languages, and finding other options when personal adaptation is not possible.

Adaptive Intercultural Communication. Ellingsworth (1983, 1988) developed the theory of adaptive intercultural communication to analyze a situation dependent on task completion and the minimization of cultural differences. Like most intercultural theory, it is conceived at the interpersonal level; however, since the nature of operating cross-culturally in a business situation is also oriented toward task completion and dependent upon the minimization of cultural difference, an attempt will be made to extend the application of Ellingsworth's theory to Danish IT companies operating in the United States. The theory is applicable to this research, for as Ellingsworth (1988, p.268) wrote: "This theory is about encounters that are purpose related Purposes arise from needs for cooperation, participation, or agreement in such areas as commerce, manufacturing, defense, education, science, technology. . . ." The theory will provide an analytical tool, then, for gauging the success of these companies' communication efforts in the United States as well as the feasibility of Gudykunst and Kim's (1995) components of perceived competence, when these components can be identified within the context of Danish communication efforts. Ellingsworth's (1988) theory consists of eleven propositions (an eleventh summative proposition was added to the theory in 1988). This thesis will attempt to employ four of Ellingsworth's (1988) propositions. The propositions are:

1. An increase in amount of functional adaptive behavior will be accompanied by accelerated progress toward task completion.
2. A shift from inequity toward parity in adaptive behavior will accelerate progress toward task completion.
3. When interaction reveals that only one person will benefit from task completion, that person will accelerate adaptive behavior.

4. The more adaptation displayed by a participant, the more change that will occur in that person's perceptions of self and the culture he or she represents. (p. 275-276)

The goal of this research is not to limit Ellingsworth's propositions to the effects cultural differences may have on Danish high-tech communication efforts in the United States, but to include the tactics and strategies that have led to success regardless of the precise effects or non-effects of cultural differences between Denmark and the United States. Communicating in the United States certainly involves factors other than overcoming cultural differences. However, by isolating the cultural differences that do exist between Denmark and the United States and the nature of the consequences for Danish communication efforts, the consequential factors external to cultural differences may become more clear and the tactics leading to success or failure easier to identify.

International Public Relations

The discussion thus far has focused on the dimensions of cultural differences, the way in which cultural differences can affect communication, and the components of effective intercultural communication and adaptation. The discussion will now turn toward the theory and practice of international public relations. This will be done with an eye toward the illumination of those areas where public relations and intercultural communication interact and the effects cultural differences, or operating in another culture, may have on public relations. Although the public relations function has had a role in the international organization for many years, the concept of international PR and the role of culture in public relations have only begun to gain more attention in recent

years. Since public relations involves so many facets of communication—interpersonal communication, mass communication, crisis management, proactive marketing communication—and since public relations so often takes the form of a dialog between organizations and their publics, cultural differences and the differing perceptions inherent in cultural differences are likely to have an effect on public relations efforts. It is conceivable then that adjusting for cultural differences may become more important as a company increases its use of public relations or initiates the public relations function as a part of its communication strategy in another country.

Effective Public Relations in Theory. To the extent that this literature review has attempted to define effective intercultural communication, an attempt will be made to do the same for public relations. Surveying the literature concerning public relations, a generally accepted definition of public relations appears to be the one devised by Grunig and Hunt (1984, p. 5): “Public relations is the management of communication between an organization and its publics.” Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992, p.86) wrote further that public relations “contributes to the effectiveness [of organizations] by building quality, long-term relationships with strategic constituencies.” Grunig (1984) outlined four models of public relations defined as press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical. Press agency is defined as promotion-based PR and public information is defined as the dissemination of, preferably favorable, information; neither model relies upon any research (Grunig, L.A., 1996). Two-way asymmetrical relies upon research to develop persuasive messages, whereas two-way symmetrical public relations relies on research and works toward fostering mutual

understanding between an organization and its publics (Grunig, L.A., 1996). Grunig et al. (1992) argued that the effective public relations department or organization would incorporate both two-way models into a cohesive strategy, although the two-way symmetrical public relations model is considered the most ideal and the most ethical.

The Grunig two-way symmetrical model of public relations focuses on relationships and emphasizes that an organization has an interdependent relationship with its public (Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling, 1992; Grunig, L.A., 1996). By managing strategic relationships, public relations can reduce conflict with those key publics on which the organization is dependent (Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling, 1992; Grunig, L.A., 1996). The nature of building relationships for public relations seems not so different, then, from effective intercultural communication, which strives to eliminate misunderstanding between two individuals or two parties. Effective public relations reduces misunderstandings by observing and interacting with the surrounding environment and spanning the distance between an organization and its publics (White and Dozier, 1992). Similarly, a key objective in effective intercultural communication is the reduction of uncertainty and anxiety, which can be accomplished by gathering information about a culture that will allow a person to make mindful predictions (Gudykunst and Kim, 1997). Zaharna (2000) wrote:

One is more theoretical and focused at the interpersonal level; the other is more applied and focused at the public communication level. Yet beneath the surface, both are intensely concerned with how culture influences communication. They share a pronounced communication-culture link that opens up the possibility of shared research experience and knowledge. (p. 86)

International Public Relations in Theory. While the practice of public relations is well established, the concept of International Public Relations is still developing. Robert I. Wakefield (1996, p. 18) wrote: “there is little consensus on what the field [of international public relations] constitutes.” Nonetheless, the concept of international public relations must start somewhere. Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, and Agee (2003, p. 378), for example, offer a reasonable definition of international public relations in their introductory text on public relations: “*International public relations* may be defined as the planned and organized effort of a company, institution or government to establish mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations.” With its emphasis on relationships, this definition bears a resemblance to the Grunig model of symmetrical public relations.

Beyond a definition, Wakefield (1996) postulated that the theoretical foundations of international public relations would arise via three methods: by the assembly of related disciplines that are already in use internationally; by the testing of current public relations theories internationally; and by constructing international public relations theories from the varied practices of public relations practices in other countries. Wakefield (1996) asserted that the latter two methods were slowly taking form and that the first method—the assembly of theory from related disciplines—would involve the scholarly areas of global society, culture, comparative management, and communication. Similarly, Zaharna (2000) wrote that public relations theory, much like intercultural theory before it, would develop in three ways: through a culture specific approach focusing on variations in public relations practices in different countries and cultures; through a culture-general

approach that would identify commonalities across cultures; and through a cultural interactive approach that focuses on how cultural differences affect the process of public relations communication. The previous sections of this literature review have attempted, as Wakefield (1996) suggested, to apply related disciplines already in international use, namely cultural variability and intercultural communication, toward a model for international public relations. Consequently, this section of *International Public Relations* will review attempts at the two latter methods described by Wakefield (1996) and the approaches described by Zaharna (2000). This literature review and thesis strive to contribute, in a small way, to the challenge of international public relations noted by Wakefield (1996, p. 27): “There is a gap between the current practice and theories that describe and explain effective practice in cross-border public relations programs. When that gap is filled, the theories can be used to determine the effectiveness of international practices.”

The gap is slowly filling. The following two theoretical discussions by Sriramesh and White (1992) and Verčič, Grunig, and Grunig (1996) fall under Wakefield’s (1996) method of testing public relations theories internationally and Zaharna’s (2000) culture-general approach. In the first discussion, Sriramesh and White (1992), analyzing the interaction of societal culture and public relations, wrote: “We contend that because a society’s culture affects the pattern of communication among members of a society, it also should have a direct impact on the public relations practice of organizations because public relations is first and foremost a communication activity” (p. 609). More specifically, Sriramesh and White (1992) put forward the idea that cultural distinctions

such as high-levels of power distance, authoritarianism, and individualism lead to the practice of asymmetrical PR practices, since members of such cultures are likely to see organizations as something private and information as proprietary. Under such circumstances, public relations practitioners lean toward the one-way methods of public relations such as the dissemination of favorable information and tactics of persuasion. This reflects Hofstede's (2001) research, which documented that low power distance cultures display openness with information, also to non-superiors, whereas high power distance cultures place hierarchical restraints on information. Consequently, Sriramesh and White (1992) theorized that cultures with low levels of power distance and individualism, and higher interpersonal trust among workers would be more likely to employ symmetrical public relations, and hence more effective public relations. Sriramesh and White (1992) further theorized that an organization could, even in the context of a high power distance culture, still implement symmetrical public relations practices, if the personalities of the organization's power holders fostered a participative corporate culture.

In the second discussion and experiment, Verčič, Grunig, and Grunig (1996) went further by conceptualizing generic principles of public relations that could be applied across borders; Verčič et al. also identified specific contextual variables that would affect the implementation of public relations in different societies. As such, Verčič et al. are concerned with global public relations. Anderson (1989) described international public relations as the tailoring of practices to distinctive societies and markets; global public relations, by comparison, relies upon a general perspective that can be applied across

markets and societies with specific adjustments for regional differences. Verčič et al. (1996) postulated that effective public relations across cultures would require two-way symmetrical models of public relations; well-trained and educated practitioners in representation on the management team; and practitioners with real positions of influence in an independent management function separate from other functions. Verčič et al. (1996) thereafter identified five contextual variables that would affect the ability of an organization to practice the aforementioned generic principles: the political-economic system, culture, the extent of activism, the level of development, and the media system. In their research on Slovenia, Verčič et al. (1996) focused on the first two variables. However, by applying these generic principles in Slovenia, Verčič et al. (1996) also shed light on Sriramesh and White's (1992) postulation that symmetrical public relations could be implemented in an culture with a tendency toward high levels of authoritarianism and power distance.

In their research, Verčič et al. (1996) discovered that symmetrical public relations is extremely difficult to practice in countries which have a political-economic system with centralized, authoritarian tendencies, but that success can be achieved provided power holders have a symmetrical view of public relations, as Sriramesh and White (1992) postulated. Moreover, Verčič et al. (1996) found that the persistent practice of the generic principles of public relations over time can change the aspects of society that make the practice of public relations difficult. In their analysis of the Pristop Communication Group, Verčič et al. (1996) found that Pristop was performing the generic principles of public relations outlined earlier. With adjustments for cultural and

societal variables, Pristop was able to achieve success and excellence in its public relations practices. Verčič et al. (1996) concluded therefore that public relations can be global rather than international and that the generic principles laid out by Verčič et al. (1996) are applicable across borders.

Concerning cultural interaction in public relations communication, Zaharna (2001) offered what she called an “in-awareness” approach to public relations communication. The term “in-awareness,” which Zaharna (2001) borrowed from the notable intercultural communication researcher, Edward T. Hall, refers to the implicit and explicit differences in culture. Zaharna (2001) wrote:

The goal of intercultural communication research was to identify culturally-mediated phenomena that were "out-awareness" and bring them "in-awareness." By bringing aspects of culture "in-awareness," the many distortions and misunderstandings that plague cross-cultural communication could be explained and even compensated for. (p. 136)

As such, Zaharna (2001) defined two areas of phenomena that affect international public relations, namely national and cultural differences, and advocated therefore developing a country profile and a cultural profile in international settings. Thereafter, Zaharna (2001) encouraged developing a communication profile that could reveal “culturally-mediated communication behaviors embedded in various public relations activities” (p. 137).

Not unlike Verčič et al. (1996), Zaharna (2001) identified six categories that can help an international public relations practitioner establish national differences: political structure, economic structure, mass media, infrastructure, legal structure, and social structure. The political structure focuses on the institutions of power in a country that influence decision-making and power relationships. Depending on the economic

structure of the country, public relations efforts may vary from mass communication efforts to interpersonal communication. American public relations practice, for example, has been historically based in the decentralized, free market economy. When assessing the mass media, one must often take into account the level of technological development and education in a country; in some countries (highly literate) the medium of choice may be the newspaper, whereas in other countries (largely illiterate) use of the radio system may be preferred. Today, the level of infrastructure also plays an important role: the levels of development in transport, communication, and technology are likely to differ greatly. A country may also have religious codes and social codes intricately mixed in its legal structure, unlike the United States, which has more of a tradition for the separation of church and state. Finally, the social structure of a country can offer a significant challenge, which can possibly be alleviated by thorough demographic research (Zaharna, 2001).

Regarding cultural differences, Zaharna (2001) identified five categories that can assist an international public relations practitioner in cross-cultural situations, which she defined as high-context/low-context, monochronic/polychronic, doing and being, future tense/past tense, and linear/nonlinear. The dimension of high-context/low-context refers to how much meaning is found in the context versus the message itself. Low context cultures, such as the American culture, tend to place the most emphasis on the message content. Monochronic and polychronic refer to the way in which cultures organize time: polychronic cultures are likely to be engaged in many activities at once, while monochronic cultures tend to focus on one thing at a time. Doing cultures place

emphasis on achievement, visible accomplishments, and products of doing, whereas being cultures see more importance in an individual's birth, family background, age, and rank. Future-tense, or future oriented, cultures focus more on change and innovation, and public relations practitioners in such cultures will be more engaged in forecasting, scheduling, planning and strategizing; past-tense, or past oriented, cultures focus more on the historical perspectives of activities and will struggle possibly with such tasks as planning and strategizing. Finally, linear cultures search for beginnings and endings and unitary themes, whereas non-linear cultures are characterized by multiple themes, oral traditions, and non-verbal communication (Zaharna, 2001). It should be noted that these categories may be better equipped to pinpoint the difference between western and eastern cultures, but there is value nonetheless in Zaharna's concept of a cultural profile. This thesis will likely supplement Zaharna's cultural categories with Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions to better illuminate the differences between the two western cultures under examination in this study.

Having researched and established country and cultural profiles, Zaharna (2001) theorized that a public relations practitioner would then be able to identify how these differences affected the process of public relations communications. Again, Zaharna (2001) outlined five categories of communication where these differences will have an influence: verbal behaviors, non-verbal behaviors, visual communication, persuasive appeals, and the communication matrix. Verbal communication is one of the most common areas of misunderstanding in cross-cultural settings; advertising and public relations are ripe with examples of products and campaigns that have been translated

poorly to another language with deleterious effects. Nonverbal communication typically consists of gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and eye behavior, to name a few, and this area of communication is often most susceptible to cultural incomprehension and can have a significant impact when a practitioner fails to recognize non-verbal communication or communicates non-verbally in a way that is unacceptable. Considering public relations' reliance on collaterals, a public relations practitioner must also be cognizant of visual communication: a non-linear culture may find the brochures of linear cultures bland and empty, whereas a linear culture may find the press materials of a non-linear culture to be busy and amateurish. When attempting to engage and persuade a foreign audience, it is important to recognize the importance of rhetorical styles: the system of logic for making an argument in one culture may differ significantly from culture to culture. Lastly, Zaharna (2001) advocates analyzing the communication matrix of a country, so that one can gauge the importance of mass communication and interpersonal communication and ascertain the best and most acceptable channel for communicating a message. By developing these three profiles, Zaharna (2001) claimed that the approach provided "a tool for exploring and discussing complex projects in culturally-sensitive, specific terms" (p. 147).

Thus far, this section on international public relations theory and research has reviewed two of the methods outlined by Wakefield and two of the approaches outlined by Zaharna. The last area of international public relations theory concerns comparative public relations studies, an area which both Wakefield (1996) and Zaharna (2000) define as the study of variations in public relations to specific countries and cultures. Since this

thesis concerns itself with Denmark and the United States, it seems important to illuminate the differences in public relations practices in these two countries. Literature on public relations practices in Denmark did not prove to be attainable, but the author is hopeful that the literature review together with this study's qualitative interviews will reveal much about the communication practices of Danish IT professionals and how that might affect public relations efforts in the United States. Nonetheless, it is the American culture that is most important in a way, since this study is concerned with the implications of Danes practicing public relations in the United States. It is important that the Danes identify the culturally mediated phenomena of their own culture, but ultimately these characteristics and practices will have to be adjusted for an American public.

Vasquez and Taylor (1999), in a quantitative research study, sought to provide "a snapshot of American public relations practice and to examine what cultural values influence American practices" (p. 434). This was accomplished by combining Hofstede's (1984) dimensions of culture with Grunig's (1992) models of public relations. Data was gathered through a questionnaire survey with 134 practitioners. Vasquez and Taylor (1999) found that high power distance and masculinity correlated with press agency; they discovered that uncertainty avoidance and high power distance correlated with public information, whereas collectivism correlated negatively with the public information model. Concerning the two-way models of public relations, Vasquez and Taylor (1999) found that collectivism and individualism correlated with two-way asymmetrical, whereas two-way symmetrical also correlated with these dimensions as well as femininity. Vasquez and Taylor (1999) concluded therefore that there is a strong

relationship between power distance and one-way models of public relations and a strong relationship between collectivism and femininity and the two-way models of public relations.

Vasquez and Taylor (1999) noted that their respondents ranked high on individualism and particularly femininity: “Both male and female respondents in this survey claimed to value cooperation, good relationships with co-workers, and the full use of their skills in a job” (p. 444). Nonetheless, Vasquez and Taylor (1999) also discovered that American practitioners of public relations overwhelmingly use the one-way models of public relations. The researchers found this curious, considering that their research showed “that the practitioners in the current study do not work under power distance conditions that dictate their communication practices” (p. 445). Vasquez and Taylor (1999) concluded therefore that the reason American practitioners may apply the one-models of public relations is because these models are easier and because practitioners may lack knowledge of alternatives.

Research Questions

The literature review began with an analysis of cultural variability and the corresponding research of Geert Hofstede (1984, 2001) and Harry C. Triandis (1995), which indicated that cultural differences exist between Denmark and the United States. This will constitute the context for the proposed research. Subsequent analysis revealed the influences of cultural differences upon communication and effective intercultural communication as defined by William B. Gudykunst and Young Yun Kim (1997). Their

approach to intercultural communication in conjunction with Huber W. Ellingsworth's (1988) theory of adaptive intercultural communication will constitute the analytical framework for examining the extent of cultural effects upon Danish high-tech communication efforts and the general communication strategies that have led to success and failure in United States. The methods and approaches to international public relations theory—outlined by Wakefield (1996) and Zaharna (2000) and explored by Sriramesh and White (1992), Verčič et al. (1996), Zaharna (2001), and Vasquez and Taylor (1999)—in unison with, first, the aforementioned theories of cultural dimensions and intercultural communication and, second, the study's research findings, will be used to make reasoned predictions concerning prospective public relations strategies for Danish IT companies. The following research questions will guide the implementation of the aforementioned analytical framework:

- 1. Are Danish IT-professionals and/or business communicators operating in the United States mindful of cultural differences between Denmark and the United States?**
- 2. If so, have these differences necessitated communication adjustment and what effect have these adjustments had on their communication efforts?**
- 3. What kinds of communication strategies and tactics have Danish IT companies been using in the United States and what has been the result?**
- 4. Given the initial research, what are the implications for prospective public relations efforts on the part of Danish IT organizations in the United States?**

Chapter 3

Method

This thesis constitutes an exploratory study. In concert with the theoretical framework and the method of research, it strives to produce defensible answers to the questions posed at the conclusion of the literature review.

Babbie (2004) argued that exploratory studies are useful when the proposed research approaches an unknown topic of study; such studies offer an opportunity for producing fresh insights that can be used for further, in-depth research at a later date. There are some unknown conditions involved with this research. For example, the cultural differences between Danes and Americans have been researched, but the effect of these differences on cross-cultural communication between these two parties is unknown. The nature of Danish communication in the context of high-tech companies is unknown, as well, since the establishment of Danish high-tech companies in the United States is fairly recent.

The research contained herein is qualitative. While aspects of culture and communication may be measured quantitatively, as Hofstede (1984, 2002) did in his seminal study on cultural differences, this thesis attempts to gather useful data through human experience. A qualitative study allows the researcher, as Berg (2001) suggested, to reach the “essence and ambiance” of a subject, because, as Babbie (2004, p. 307) argued, “the chief strength of this method lies in the depth of understanding it permits.” While the concept of measurement inherent in quantitative research is often very alluring,

because it deals with quantifiable things and therefore seems more verifiable, such methods will not provide the most optimal answers regarding this research. Qualitative research is best suited to ascertaining the nature of the challenges Danish companies experience communicating across cultures, because it allows this research to delve into the nuances of the cultural differences between Denmark and the United States and the communication practices of Danish IT companies.

Collection of Data

The collection of data in this thesis consisted of semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted during the fall of 2003.

The interviews were structured in the sense that each person was typically asked the same question in the same order, but flexible in the sense that the interviewer posed probing questions when appropriate and the interviewees were allowed to contemplate the questions and develop their answers. This was done in an attempt to conduct interviews that, as Kvale (1996) described, resemble a conversation, but still one where the prodding of the interviewer is short and the answers of the interviewee are long. This allows the interviewer, Johnson argued (2002, p. 106), “to achieve the same deep level of knowledge and understanding as the members or participants.” As mentioned earlier regarding qualitative research, this gave the interviewer the opportunity to explore the nuances of the communicative challenges experienced by Danish IT professionals.

The order of the questions was also taken into consideration during the construction of the interview questions. The essential questions, described by Berg

(2001) as those questions concerning the central focus of the study, were placed toward the end of the interview to avoid coloring the entire interview. Asking about cultural differences at the beginning of the interview would have framed every question in a cultural context and would have limited the useful data in the responses, since the interviewees would likely have censored all data they deemed irrelevant according to their perception of the goals and objectives of the interview. As Kvale (1996) argued, guiding the structure and direction of an interview requires adherence to the purpose of the study.

As such, the interviews were structured with the central questions of this research in mind:

- Are the interviewees aware of cultural differences between Denmark and the United States? Do these differences correspond with Hofstede's dimensions of variability?
- What are the cultural differences between Denmark and the United States as perceived by the interviewees?
- Have these interviewees or their employees had to make adjustments in their communication efforts for these cultural differences, such as changes in marketing messages or in sales methods?
- What kind of communication strategies and tactics, i.e., advertising, public relations, direct sales, etc., have Danish IT professionals been using in the United States and what kind of challenges have they faced?

Since the professionals interviewed for this study were located around the United States and in Denmark, the interviews were conducted by telephone. The cost of conducting these interviews was minimal, since the study was sponsored by the Trade Commission of Denmark in San Jose. The Trade Commission agreed to allow access to those records and databases, which would help to facilitate interviews with Danish IT business professionals who have established or are establishing Information Technology companies in the United States. The Trade Commission also provided the use of its telephone system for these interviews.

One of the advantages described by Shuy (2002) regarding telephone interviews is the efficiency of data collection, which results from the speed with which an interview can be conducted. While Shuy (2002) was referring to an advantage for the interviewer, in this study the expediency of telephone interviewing likely facilitated more interviews and possibly more productive interviews. All of the interviewees were upper management business people with tight schedules. Conducting telephone interviews eliminated all the pretense involved with meeting face-to-face and allowed the interviewees to focus on the interview questions and get back to business immediately afterwards. Despite their schedules, the vast majority of the interviewees gave extensive answers in response to the questions posed. Had the interviews not been conducted over the telephone, interview opportunities might have been significantly less. The interviews lasted anywhere from 25 to 45 minutes and were scheduled via email.

Sources of Data

The total number of participants for this study reached 16 Danish IT professionals working in the United States and Denmark for companies expanding their products and services to the U.S. market. The true identities of the subjects and their respective companies have not been revealed herein. They are identified only by pseudonyms. As these individuals are rather high-ranking company officials, this was done to maintain confidentiality and encourage detailed answers to the interview questions.

This is the simple description of the total units of analysis that compromise the data of this research. Beyond this straightforward description, however, there are three concepts concerning research methods with which the qualitative researcher must reconcile his or her data. These three concepts are commonly referred to as the trinity of generalizability, reliability, and validity.

The participants in this study were purposely chosen for their experience working in the United States for Danish IT companies. This follows Kvale's (1996, p. 233) explanation of participant selection: "Interview subjects are not selected at random but by other criteria, such as typicality or extremeness, or simply by accessibility." The subjects for this research were not chosen at random, nor could they have been considering the expressed desire of this research to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and communication challenges facing Danish IT companies. However, as such, this selection of interviewees cannot be statistically generalized to a greater population, a common weakness in purposive sampling (Babbie, 2004).

Nonetheless, as Kvale (1996) wrote, there are different forms of generalizability, including naturalistic generalization and analytical generalization. Analytical generalization, Kvale (1996) wrote, “involves a reasoned judgment about the extent to which the findings from one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation.” While the purposive sampling of this qualitative study may be limited in statistical generalizability, it may still contain relevant knowledge for an individual in a similar situation to those described in the interviews. Moreover, statistical generalizability is not always desirable since it can strip a research area of its context (Patton, 1987). As Janesick (2002, p. 382) stated, “Qualitative research depends on the presentation of solid descriptive data, so that the researcher leads the reader to an understanding of the meaning of the experience under study.” The lack of mathematical transferability of data to other groups then, a valued goal in quantitative research, is the recognized tradeoff made for the richness of context gained by qualitative interviewing and the discriminatory selection of subjects.

With regards to reliability, as mentioned earlier, care was taken to ensure that the answers given by the interviewees would not be unduly colored by the structure or wording of the questions, that is, to lead the interviewees to a conclusion or perception that was not their own. Given careful structuring of the questions and the extensive experience of the interviewees, one could assume that the questions and answers supplied have a strong degree of reliability. Scientific research, however, seldom allows room for assumptions, but rather expects that the data gathered and the methods by which it is gathered can be verified. As Babbie (2004, p. 141) wrote: “Reliability is a concern every

time a single observer is the source of data, because we have no certain guard against the impact of that observer's subjectivity." There are methods, described by Babbie (2004) for establishing the reliability of interviews, such as the split-half method and the test-retest method, but the size of the sample for this study does not lend itself to the split-half method and the busy schedule of the interviewees and the practice of in depth interviewing does not allow for retesting the answers gathered from them. For qualitative interviewers then, close attention must be paid, once again, to the structuring and wording of a study's questions.

Finally, the researcher must be concerned with the validity of the answers gathered from study participants. Babbie (2004, p. 143) wrote: "Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration." Triangulation can contribute significantly to the validation of data gathered by the interviewing process. As Fielding and Fielding (1986, p. 31) wrote: "Any information-gathering device is both privileged and constrained by its own particular structure and location." This research will rely upon the type of triangulation, which Fielding and Fielding (1986) refer to as data triangulation, and specifically "space triangulation, taking the form of comparative research." (p. 25). The abundance of data gathered in these interviews lends itself to a comparative analysis with the previous research conducted by Hofstede (1984, 2001), Triandis (1995), and Nelson and Shavitt (2002) on cultural differences and Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) and Ellingsworth's theories of intercultural communication. Fielding and Fielding (1986) also noted that the importance of triangulation is not simply the combination of data, but the reduction of

threats to validity that each may suffer. By comparing the data gathered in this study with the aforementioned research, the researcher anticipates that the doubts regarding the validity of the interviewing process can be mitigated and the validity of the data can be strengthened.

Analysis of Data

The practical process of analyzing the data will be done using McCracken's (1988) five-stage model of interview analysis. The model consist of 5 stages, which represent ascending levels of generality and analysis. The first stage consists of simple observations. The second stage begins to analyze these observations: first, individually; second, in concert with one another. The third stage analyzes the interaction of the observations made during the second level. The fourth stage collectively analyzes all observations generated during the previous stages for themes. The fifth stage allows the interviewer to draw conclusions from the collection of data (McCracken, 1988).

Thus, through the cautious formation of interview questions, close attention to the trinity of generalizability, reliability, and validity, and a methodical review of the information generated from the study questions, the researcher will attempt to draw well-founded, qualified conclusions about the nature of Danish IT communication efforts in the United States.

Figure 2

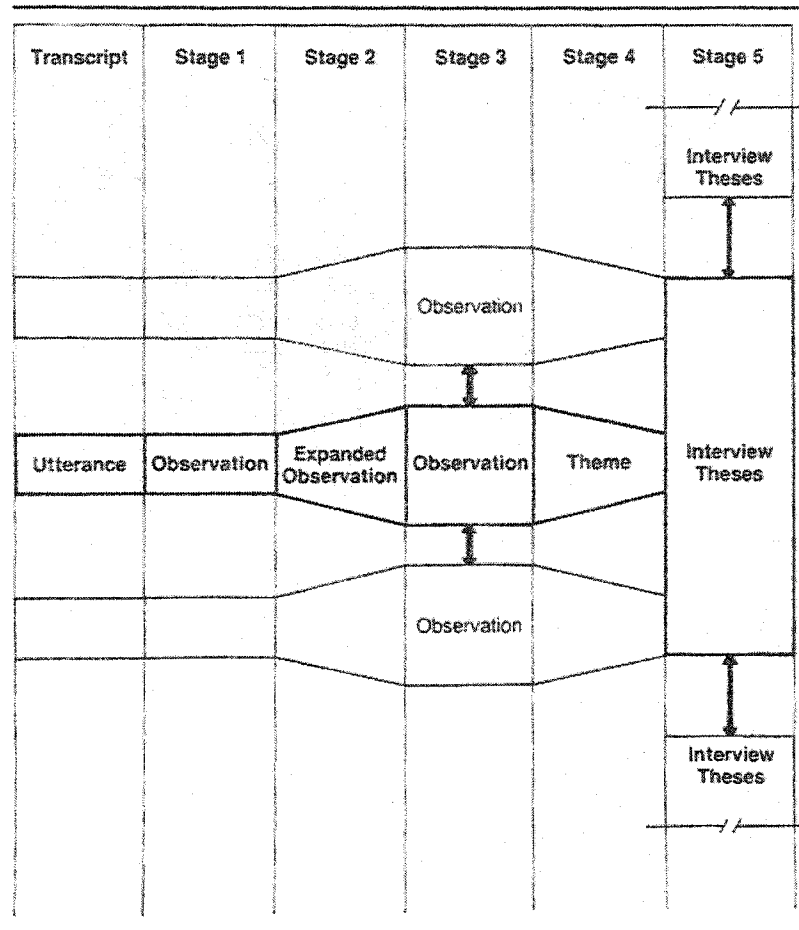


Figure 2: Long Qualitative Interview: Stages of Analysis

Long Qualitative Interview: Stages of Analysis

Source: *The Long Interview*: copyright 1988, Sage Publications

Figure 3

Interview Participants

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Company</u>	<u>Type</u>
Peter Dalgaard	CIO	Solution IT Group	Phone
Henrik Jørgensen	President, CEO	Quick Think Technology	Phone
Vagn Christiansen	US Director	Ingram Info Systems	Phone
Rud Axedahl	US Director	Sandsten Security	Phone
Poul Ørting Kærgaard	President	Bodytronics A/S	Phone
Lasse Nilsson	Marketing Director	Advantage Solutions	Phone
Mogens Johansen	CEO	Point Star Systems A/S	Phone
Peter Jensen	CEO	Search Tech A/S	Phone
Paul Erik Hansen	CEO	Print Soft A/S	Phone
Frank Frandsen	Marketing Director	Print Soft A/S	Phone
Søren Baktorp	US Director	IT Invest A/S	Phone
Lars Kirkegaard	Vice Director	Radar IT A/S	Phone
Thomas Jensen	US President	Radar IT A/S	Phone
Christian Feldborg	Exec. VP	DT Engineering	Phone
Jakob Søndergaard	CEO	DK Data A/S	Phone
Morten Langsten Nielsen	VP of Sales	Fast-tech A/S	Phone

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this research has been to explore the nature of Danish IT companies' communication efforts in the United States. Using in-depth interviews, the research has attempted to identify the existence of cultural differences between Denmark and the United States in the context of Danish IT companies operating in the United States. The research has also sought to discover what kind of adaptations Danish IT companies must make in their communication efforts for those cultural differences as well as the market differences in the United States. Lastly, the research has sought to identify the kinds of communication strategies and tactics that Danish IT companies are using in America and what kind of communicative challenges they face in the process. Using contemporary international public relations theory, this thesis will discuss how the current communication efforts of Danish IT companies and the socio-cultural/market context may affect prospective public relations efforts for Danish IT companies.

The in-depth interview research revealed many interesting patterns. This research and the subsequent analysis appear to have isolated some general cultural differences within the context of Danish IT companies operating in the United States. There are indications of a difference in persuasive communication style between Danes and Americans, differences in the social structure of American and Danish work environments, and differences in priorities and values concerning areas such as leisure and work.

The interview data suggests that Danish IT professionals interviewed for this study saw a need to adjust their communication messages for the persuasive difference in American and Danish communication. Interviewees also saw a need to adjust for a different market structure in the United States: communication had to be much more focused for a more segmented market. Interview data also indicates that interviewees felt that it was important for a Danish company to exude an American image or essence to succeed on the American market. Most felt that this could be accomplished by hiring qualified Americans who could ensure the presentability of their communications and the American essence for which they were striving.

There are indications that Danish IT companies rely primarily on direct sales, tradeshow, networking, and cold calls to sell their products on the U.S. market. As such, interviewees observed a greater need for networking in the United States and expressed difficulties penetrating America's voicemail culture. Interviewees also expressed difficulty in achieving awareness in the United States. Some interviewee observations and comments also indicate a limited use of marketing communication. Public relations, when utilized, consisted of one-way communication models.

Research Question One:

Are Danish IT-professionals and/or business communicators operating in the United States mindful of cultural differences between Denmark and the United States?

The formulation of this question stems from the research of Gudykunst and Kim (1997), who defined mindfulness as being cognitively aware that one is communicating and operating in another culture. This question was addressed in the interviews by asking about the cultural differences between Denmark and the United States and then allowing the interviewees to think upon those differences and to explain the differences as they understood them.

Analysis: First Stage

The first stage of McCracken's (1988) analytical process consists of the simple task of observing the individual utterances of an interview. McCracken (1988) advised the researcher not to begin to make connections between the data or formulate premature conclusions about the data. Although this can be very difficult, as it is part of human nature to assemble stimuli into patterns that give understanding, the researcher is better off simply noting the points of interest in an interview that may develop into something greater.

In this case, simple observation of the data reveals that there are many references to cultural differences and descriptive utterances of such phenomena. As such, these basic observations are both stimulating and encouraging, as these observations begin to

show the opportunities for analysis. McCracken (1988) advised the researcher to make a mental or physical note of these doorways to analysis, to which one could return during the second stage of analysis.

Analysis: Second Stage

In the second stage of McCracken's (1988) analytical process, the research goes beyond the first stage of basic observation of utterances toward the review of some general observations on the part of the interviewees that will begin a process of analysis leading to the establishment of patterns, themes and finally theses that can be substantiated by the literature review. Here the researcher is looking for basic observations on the part of the interviewees.

When the interviewees were posed the question, "Are there perceptible cultural differences between Denmark and the United States?" the overwhelming response seemed to be "Yes." Some of the interviewees immediately began to pinpoint what they felt were cultural differences; some interviewees needed time to think upon the cultural differences; others discussed the nature of recognizing cultural differences. As Rud Axedahl noted: "I had already been to the United States a number of times, so I was pretty familiar with American culture. But I hadn't done so much business over there, so I was surprised by the degree to which cultural differences could have an influence at the business level." Peter Dalgaard stated similarly: "There are a lot of cultural differences and you'll run your head right into them, if you don't recognize them first."

A number of the interviewees qualified the nature of discussing cultural differences, noting that cultural characteristics vary greatly within the United States. Jakob Søndergaard noted: "One can't even talk about the United States as one culture. Doing business in Boston and doing business in South Carolina is just as different as doing business in Denmark and Germany." This sentiment was echoed by a number of the interviewees. The multiculturalism of America was not something that they were necessarily aware of, at least on the business level, prior to working in the United States. Peter Dalgaard explained: "One knows in Denmark that there are differences between Holland and Portugal and Greece, but one doesn't imagine that there are such big differences between the States—and there sure are. In all kinds of areas—etiquette, laws, and business culture—in all kinds of ways." The quote reveals the tricky nature of defining cultural differences, which, as the interviewee and Hofstede (2001) have pointed out, can vary across countries themselves.

Nonetheless, most of the interviewees were able to build upon the notion that there are cultural differences between Denmark and the United States. In areas such as selling methods and interpersonal communication, the social structure of the American work environment, and work and leisure values, the interviewees discovered cultural differences.

Analysis: Third Stage

In the third stage of McCracken's (1988) analytical process, the general observations of the interviewees are explored and an attempt is made to establish patterns

across the spectrum of interviews. Patterns are represented by a collection of observations, which speak to each other and seem, for all intents and purposes, to refer to the same thing or the same general area—even though different individuals are making such observations. Of course, the closer the observations resemble each other and the more interview subjects who make a similar observation, the tighter the knit of the pattern will be. However, in those places where the knit is less than tight, the literature review and the research contained therein can help to support and develop the observations, and this will take place, but at a later stage of analysis. For now the concern is the basic assembly of probable patterns.

The Danish IT professionals interviewed for this study made some very interesting observations about the nature of sales communication in the United States and in Denmark. The interviewees perceived the American method of sales as different than what they are used to in Denmark. Søren Andersen noted: “It takes time to become accustomed to the sales culture over here. Sales people will lie to a customer faster than you would think is possible.” Although Søren Andersen’s statement represents a rather strong opinion, it is notable because it bears a striking similarity to the statements of other interviewees. Christian Feldborg described American sales communication as “less realistic and over-promising.” Rud Axedahl explained, “You need to know that you will have to exaggerate a little bit—you can’t hold back.” “The cultural difference,” Mogens Oddersen said, “is probably that there is a lot more hype in the way people sell things [in the United States]. It doesn’t have to be a rational argument in my opinion, but the specs on the product have to be overly convincing. Could the customer, in reality, really get by

with a lighter product offering, less accessories? It really doesn't have anything to do with that."

Not surprisingly, a number of the interviewees found Danish sales communication to be insufficient for the American market. The Danish method of sales communication seems to be characterized by an unassuming and reserved approach, which can perhaps be illustrated by a common catch phrase in the Danish language: "Det er ikke så ringe endda," which translates to "It's really not that bad." According to Brian Haltrup, "We have a bad tendency toward understating things in Scandinavia and that just won't work in the United States." "It doesn't pay to be modest in any way with what Denmark is selling," said Mogens Oddersen. "One can't make an understated sales pitch over here," said Rud Axedahl. An observation by Christian Feldborg echoes his peers and offers an explanation to the very first statement by Søren Andersen, "I think we are a little more realistic in the way we communicate, and we get irritated if people exaggerate too much because they want to sell something."

One interviewee expressed the communication styles of Danes and Americans in a slightly different fashion: "In Denmark," noted Peter Dalgaard, "the way in which one expresses oneself, particularly in internal communication, will often be perceived by Americans as much too brutal, direct, and impolite. In the United States there is a use of language that is more superficial and much more polite." Several of the interviewees also remarked that Americans could seem very positive in the beginning of a sales process and then withdraw from the sales negotiations unexpectedly. Christian Feldborg noted: "Where a Dane will say from the start, 'No thanks, it's not for me,' Americans will say,

‘Well, that sounds exciting. Let’s have a meeting.’ But then they say no at the last second.” Poul Ørting and Jakob Søndergaard, referencing their experiences, also found that Americans can be very positive and open toward new ideas, but reticent toward the end of a sales proposal.

The Danish IT professionals interviewed also had a number of things to say about the social structure of business in Danish and American societies that may indicate cultural differences. Thomas Jensen noted: “It is not as acceptable to pose questions to company leadership, to challenge top executives, and to come with new ideas.” Lasse Nilsson noted similarly “At a meeting in Denmark, people will ask the CEO some pretty tough questions; at the same meeting in the U.S., people won’t ask those questions.” Søren Andersen felt that American businesses were generally organized in rather strict boxes; work descriptions, for example, were more narrowly defined in the American workforce. Vagn Højtræ felt that Americans had a greater tendency toward letting their boss make a decision, instead of making a decision on their own. Højtræ also felt that there was much less of a tendency toward what he termed “the consensus style of Danish leadership.” Rud Axedahl also noted: “Americans don’t strive for compromise quite as much as Danes do.” Morten Langsten Nielsen explained: “Danes go into a meeting to reach an agreement and create a win-win situation. Americans go into a meeting to win and one had better take this challenge seriously. If one isn’t prepared to let Americans win or let them believe that they have won, one won’t make a sale.”

The interviewees also made several observations about American and Danish lifestyles and values. Thomas Jensen and Lars Kirkegaard, both from the same company,

felt that Danes tended to do something because it was satisfying or stimulating, whereas Americans were more profit oriented. "Everything is measured in money. Everything has a dollar value," Lars Kirkegaard said of the States. "In Denmark people can think about something without an economic perspective." Christian Feldborg said similarly: "In Denmark one thinks more about the nature and the quality of the product before one begins to think about if one can make money on it; in the United States, people ask, 'Is there a business plan in this?' And then Americans will consider product functionality and quality." Frank Frandsen expressed similar values in a different context: "Danes show up for work at 8am, leave at 4:35, and their work stays at the office; Americans work longer hours, stress more, and are more likely to give up their weekends." In yet another comparable observation, Lasse Nilsson said: "In the U.S., if there is a national holiday, someone is still covering the helpdesk support; in Denmark, the culture is: this is a holiday and the office is closed."

The many observations noted above by the Danish IT professionals interviewed for this study make up the visible patterns concerning cultural differences between Denmark and the United States. The next stage of analysis will attempt to consolidate these patterns into general themes.

Analysis: Fourth Stage

McCracken (1988) describes the fourth stage of the analytical process as the time of judgment. From the patterns that evolve out of a multiplicity of observations, the researcher must begin to harvest general themes that indicate a shared perception of, in

this case, cultural difference. The data from this research indicates that there are several themes, which are indicative of the cultural differences between Danes and Americans.

The first theme, and arguably the most clear, is a notable difference in the way in which Americans and Danes communicate persuasively. The Danish IT professionals interviewed for this research described the Danish style of persuasion as being based in a modest appeal and in the understatement. Moreover, the interviewees found this type of appeal to be rather ineffective on the American market. American persuasion, as perceived by these interviewees, was characterized by embellishment and exaggeration. As such, these descriptions and characterizations represent a significant theme of communication difference between the Danish and the American culture in a sales and business environment.

A second and similar theme—supportive of the first, but less pronounced nonetheless—is a tendency on the part of Danes to communicate more directly with less pretense versus an American tendency toward more polite speech, superficial even from a Danish perspective. This difference seemed to present itself in internal communication situations, as well as sales situations.

A third theme in the interviews concerns the social structure of the American business or the American work force. The interviewees perceived American business as being more strictly structured and somewhat more hierarchical than the Danish. Interviewees perceived fewer examples of two-way communication between American leadership and employees. They perceived less decisive participation on the part of employees and less consensus-based leadership on the part of employers.

A fourth theme that became present during the analysis of the interviews indicates a difference in priorities on the part of Danes and Americans that spans a number of areas, such as life, work, and technological development. The interviewees perceived Americans as being consistently profit-oriented, whereas Danes were perceived as placing a higher priority on the qualitative aspects of various human activities, such as work, leisure, and product development. Both sides seem capable of understanding the other, but the differences expressed here appear to represent two different starting points in perception.

The preceding discussion represents the dominant themes on cultural differences that presented themselves during the course of the interviews. It should be noted that these themes represent the perceptions of those interviewed for this research, and while their statements and the respective patterns and themes that emerge are rather intriguing, these themes are not conclusive evidence that such cultural distinctions are real and do exist. However, these themes in conjunction with the earlier research literature can lead to the establishment of greater certainty.

Analysis: Fifth Stage

The last stage of McCracken's analytical process consists of analyzing the data themes established in stage four in conjunction with the secondary foundation research of the literature review. Having done so, one can begin to construct a thesis or theses that can be applied toward the original research question.

The first theme of the interview data reveals a difference in persuasive appeals between Danes and Americans, with Danish appeals taking a more modest tone and American appeals a more embellished tone. Similarly, the second theme of the interview data suggests a tendency toward more direct communication on the part of Danes and more cursory communication on the part of Americans. Both of these themes have support in the research of Hofstede (2001) on femininity and the research of Nelson and Shavitt (2002) on horizontal and vertical individualism. Hofstede's (2001) research revealed that feminine cultures prefer what he defined as *leveling*. Leveling means that members of feminine cultures do not try to be better than others. This is also reflected in the unspoken social code of Denmark called the Jante law: "You should not feel that you are more than us" (de Mooij, 1997). Masculine cultures, in which the United States is included, appreciate *excelling*, which Hofstede (2001) defined as attempts on the part of individuals to be the best. As Brian Haltrup described: in the United States, "Everyone is the leading vendor of this and that with the greatest product of all times." In their research, Nelson and Shavitt (2002) noted as well that horizontal cultures strive to create equilibrium between people, which encourages more moderate advertising appeals, whereas the achievement values of a vertical culture can lead to more assertive appeals of product superiority.

The third theme of the interview data reveals that that the interviewees perceived the social context of American business as different in structure than what they were accustomed to in Denmark. The interviewees noticed less of a tendency to challenge leadership and less of a tendency toward consensus. The interviewee responses reflect

Hofstede's (2001) research in the area of power distance and Triandis' (1995) research in vertical and horizontal individualism. While the United States scored under the median of power distance, making it a moderately low power distance culture, Denmark scored at the very bottom of the scale making it a very low power distance culture. Hofstede (2001) described employees, in low PDI countries, as being less afraid of disagreeing with their boss, whereas employees in higher PDI countries showed more of a fear of disagreeing with their superior. Hofstede (2001) also noted that in low PDI cultures managers are more satisfied with participative behavior and subordinates prefer a decision-making style on the part of management that is centered on a consultative, give-and-take method. Similarly, Triandis' (1995) research showed that vertical individualistic cultures, such as the United States, tend to accept power strata more willingly than horizontal cultures such as Denmark, which prefer less distance between subordinates and superiors. One cannot conclude from the interview data that the United States does not exhibit the aforementioned qualities of a low PDI country, as Hofstede (2001) defined America, but the data does seem to indicate that there are gradations in perception concerning the nature of low PDI cultures.

The fourth theme that emerged from the interviews was a difference in priorities in such areas as work and leisure. Here again, many of the respondents echoed the research in the literature review. The perception of Americans as being more profit oriented reflects Nelson and Shavitt's (2002) research on the achievement values of Americans, who have a greater tendency to rate wealth and monetary success as the prime, if not significant, determinants of satisfaction. Hofstede's (2001) research

revealed that work was less central in people's lives in feminine cultures and much more central in the lives of those people living in masculine cultures. Hofstede (2001) also noted that stress was much less in feminine cultures than masculine cultures.

The results of the interviews regarding cultural differences suggest that the interviewees are aware of some of the cultural differences between Denmark and the United States. The correlation of their observations with the secondary research in the literature seems to indicate that their estimation of the differences has a foundation in established research and, one might then assume, in reality. So far as being mindful consists of being familiar with the cultural differences of that society in which one is operating, the interviewees appear cognizant. So far as being mindful consists of being able to accept these differences and make adaptations, the researcher turns to the next research question to analyze what kind of adjustments the interviewees have made for these cultural differences and if these adjustments have garnered the interviewees any success in their cross-cultural activities.

Research Question Two:

If so, have these differences necessitated communication adjustment and what effect have these adjustments had on their communication efforts?

Analysis: First Stage

Once again, analysis in the first stage consisted of the individual utterances without attempting to connect the meaning of the utterances. McCracken (1986) advised

the researcher to take the utterances as face value. Once again, there are notable comments that appear to point toward the research question and the researcher notes that there are many comments concerning the adaptation of communication to cultural differences and the American market.

Analysis: Second Stage

As was done with Research Question One, the second stage of analysis concerns general observations and answers. When asked how they had adjusted for the cultural differences they described, some of the interviewees expanded upon their observations and explained how the cultural difference necessitated adaptation. Other interviewees referred back to the question, which had preceded any discussion of culture. *Is it necessary to adjust your communication efforts for the American market?* This question was also effective in bringing forth some of the cultural observations detailed under Research Question One.

However, cultural differences did not always necessitate communication adjustment. Many felt strongly that operating on the American market necessitated adjustment and many were able to say how one ought to adapt communication efforts or messages to the American market or how to ensure that a Danish IT company's communication to the American market was appropriate, but many of the interviewees were unable to say if the cultural differences they had described affected their communication—with one notable exception: the persuasive appeal. Nonetheless, all of the adjustments the interviewees felt were necessary for operating on the American

market will be discussed here, since all of these adjustments may affect prospective public relations efforts.

Analysis: Third Stage

In the third stage of analysis on the second research question, an attempt will be made again to assemble the patterns concerning the adaptation of communication for the cultural differences between the United States and Denmark, as well as the adaptations that must be made for operating on the American market according to the interviewees.

As was discussed under Research Question One, some the Danish IT professionals interviewed for this research observed that American sales messages were much more hyped and embellished than sales messages normally are in Denmark. Having recognized this, interviewees seemed prepared to make the necessary adjustments for the American market. When asked about adjusting to the different style of persuasion in America, Lars Kirkegaard pointed out: "The tone here, with respect to marketing communication, is more aggressive. One won't accomplish anything with a politely formulated advertisement. It ought to be a little aggressive and a little provocative in style." Speaking more to interpersonal sales, Peter Jensen noted: "It is not uncommon to exaggerate a little bit and say that one has a product ready for July to get the contract, even when one knows it won't be ready before September. But that is just the way it is over here." Despite this difference in style, interviewees seemed able to accept the American sales approach or at least take a pragmatic approach. Søren Andersen noted: "It is not a culture that we have adopted, but one does have to accept that those are just

the conditions over here and we must address those conditions when we meet and communicate with our customers.”

In addition to having a marketing approach and marketing message that was more aggressive and somewhat more embellished than realistic, the Danish IT professionals interviewed for this research also observed that their communication needed to be much more targeted than was necessary in Denmark. Rud Axedahl noted: “Your message must be very sharp and that is something Danish companies have a problem with.” Peter Dalgaard made a very similar observation: “Your message must be very, very sharp, much sharper than one would ever imagine sitting in Copenhagen.” The reason that many gave for this difference is a market in the United States that is much more segmented than what Danish companies are normally used to in Denmark. Jakob Søndergaard explained: “In Denmark the market is broad because there are only 5 million people. One must have a broad selection of offerings and products to make money. It is the opposite in the United States: one must be narrow and specialized. The generalized Danish approach isn’t worth a dime here.” Paul Erik Hansen added: “One can surely learn something from the very specialized Danish companies that over time have come to the United States—those who haven’t cracked trying—who have this or that very narrow product, because they know precisely which 30 customers they have to go after.”

When the interviewees were asked how they adjusted their communications for the American market, another pattern emerged in their responses. By in large they hired a local communications practitioner or hired a local marketing communication agency. “We have an American in our marketing function here and he knows what the lingo is

over here. The communication we have over here is very precise. There are no spelling errors or grammatical errors. This gives our communications, of course, a much more professional impression. It is very important to have an American on board.” Frank Frandsen said as well: “We had to deal with this right away. All marketing materials had to be American. We didn’t take any materials from Denmark. Press releases are rewritten and put in American press release format and language. Brochures are created in the U.S. Our web content is all American, written in the U.S.” Brian Haltrup declared adamantly: “I would never have a Danish marketing bureau or Danish PR person handle my communication. The exercise in communication is so much greater here.”

Commenting also on the marketing proficiency of Danes, Rud Axedahl remarked: “We are talented engineers and technicians, but we aren’t the best marketers or salespeople. Americans are 10 times better and one can sense it in their culture that they are salespeople from the time when they are children and are accustomed to it.” Mogens Oddersen said: “We try to adjust our communication so it is appropriate for the American market. We’ve done this by hiring an American as our Communications Manager. She is responsible for all of our PR and brochures and everything, so it all works under American conditions.”

Another thread of comments became apparent during the interviews, which seemed to reflect upon the nature of being Danish and operating a Danish IT company in the United States. A few interviewees felt that being a Danish company could have a positive advantage. Peter Jensen observed: “Americans generally perceive Danish companies as harmless and peaceful with an honest business culture.” Others noted that

being Scandinavian generally generated positive connotations for most Americans.

However, a majority appeared to observe something quite different. "A company needs a U.S. face on what it is doing," said Thomas Jensen. "Don't fool yourself into thinking that being Danish counts for anything," said Lars Kirkegaard, coming from the same organization as Thomas Jensen. Mogens Oddersen, after speaking about what he considered the hype in U.S. marketing communications, said, "Another thing is that one must look like an American company. We don't say too much about the fact that we are not Americans. We let them keep the illusion. If they believe it themselves, we don't tell them any different." This need for an American appearance seems to arise from what the interviewees interpreted as a certain degree of reticence on the part of Americans. Henrik Jørgensen commented: "I think Americans are very skeptical about things that don't come from the United States." Brian Haltrup noted: "They may think that it is very charming that one speaks with a funny accent, but when it come to business, many Americans feel that it ought to be done with locals, someone who has been to the latest baseball game." Frank Frandsen commented similarly: "American companies want to deal with Americans. They feel more comfortable dealing with Americans."

When the research delved further into these responses and asked how one puts an American face on a company or how one makes dealing with a Danish company more acceptable to Americans, interviewees referred back to their comments on adapting their communication to the American market and cultural differences or their responses resembled their earlier comments. Brian Haltrup explained: "One must be aware that one will have to be represented by local people." Peter Dalgaard said, "Again, it is important

to have an American on board. It is a key success factor over here that one is prepared to communicate to customers in a way they are accustomed to.” Frank Frandsen said similarly: “We don’t hide the fact that we are Danish, but when we are out there selling and providing support, the Americans have to be out in front with the Danes in Denmark backing them up.”

When asked if the adaptations being made for the American market were successful, the answers given by the interviewees seem to suggest that they feel as though they are on the right track. Mogens Oddersen noted: “A modest approach doesn’t work. That’s been our experience. It’s just something you have to keep in mind. There are a lot of factors involved, but our sales are doing ok in an economy that isn’t doing that great.” Christian Feldborg noted: “It was kind of a forgone conclusion that we needed an American on board to help us with our sales and marketing.” Rud Axedahl noted: “Our American director had a marketing background. She was good at identifying our message and it went actually very well. We had more leads than we could follow up on.”

The preceding collections of observations and comments constitute that patterns that arose in the interviews concerning the adaptation of communication and culture. In the next stage of analysis, the research will consolidate the patterns into general themes that can be applied toward the theories of intercultural communication in the fifth and final stage of analysis.

Analysis: Fourth Stage

Regarding the adaptation of communication to the American market and the cultural differences between Denmark and the United States, several themes have emerged from the patterns of observations made in the third stage of analysis.

First, a strong theme running throughout the observations made by the interviewees seems to indicate Danish IT communication in the United States must be adjusted for the American cultural style of persuasive communication that is more aggressive and exaggerated than what Danish IT professionals are used to in Denmark.

A second theme emerging from the comments of the interviewees appears to be the need to create a message for the American market that is more focused and more targeted than marketing messages typically are in Denmark. This need does not seem to be related to a cultural difference, but rather a difference in the marketplace: the Danish market is much more broad because of its small size, whereas the American market is much more narrow due to its greater size and higher degree of competition.

A third theme concerns the way in which the interviewees and their respective firms chose to deal with communication adjustments. Many of the interviewees reached the conclusion that the best way to ensure the successful accommodation of cultural and marketing differences was to hire a local person or a local agency, although there seems to be a greater tendency toward having an internal local rather than an external local.

A fourth theme that arose from the interview research indicates a reticence on the part of Americans toward foreign, and consequently Danish, firms. The interviewees spoke of a need to either create a company image that looked American or at least make

it acceptable for Americans to the point where it would reduce their reticence.

Interviewees felt that creating such an image or dealing with such concerns on the part of potential clients and customers in the United States could best be facilitated by hiring Americans or an American communication agency.

Finally, regarding the changes that were made in the communication efforts of the Danish IT companies, the interviewees expressed confidence in the changes that were being made for cultural and market differences, although there was not conclusive evidence that their methods were working.

Analysis: Fifth Stage

In the fifth stage of analysis the theoretical approach of Gudykunst and Kim (1997) to intercultural communication and Ellingsworth's (1998) theory of adaptive intercultural communication will be applied to themes discussed in fourth stage of analysis.

Components of Perceived Competence. Gudykunst and Kim (1997) defined effective cross-cultural communication as the ability of a person to reduce misunderstanding and be perceived as a competent communicator. They defined the components of perceived competence as motivation, knowledge, and skills. The motivation for communicating in cross-cultural situations stems from a person's ability to reduce the anxiety that occurs when a speaker is unable to determine how other people in another culture will respond. One may fairly say that Danish IT professionals are motivated to sell their products in the United States and are therefore motivated to contact

potential customers in the United States. It has not been possible in this research to measure the ability of individual Danish IT professionals to reduce their anxiety when confronted with the lack of predictability in a cross-cultural setting and thus appear as effective communicators to their American clients and customers. However, the research does reveal a lack of confidence on the part of the interviewees in the ability of Danes to communicate effectively to an American audience in a sales situation and in official communication materials. As the interview comments indicate, at the management level of these IT companies, there is a lack of motivation to communicate in an American cultural setting. This does not necessarily stem from anxiety, but rather the conclusion that Danes do not have the requisite language skills to be perceived as competent. Nonetheless, many of the interviewees did not exhibit the motivation to speak in the context of an American sales proposal or to produce American sales materials.

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) defined the second component of perceived competence as knowledge, the awareness of what makes communication effective in a cross-cultural setting. As reflected in the fifth stage analysis of Question One, many of the observations made by the interviewees regarding cultural differences bore very close similarities to the research of Hofstede (2001), Triandis (1995), and Nelson and Shavitt (2002). The observations on the part of the interviewees about cultural differences seem then astute and knowledgeable. Additionally, the recognition on the part of the interviewees that Danes are not necessarily equipped to communicate effectively in a sales situation in American culture or through a company's American communication

materials also seems to indicate an awareness on the part of the interviewees of the degree of professionalism and clarity that is expected in these situations.

Gudykunst and Kim (1997) defined the third component of perceived competence as mindfulness. Mindfulness is defined as the ability to understand different cultures, to accept a different way of thinking and adapt to other cultures. The evidence from the interviews seems to point toward an ability on the part of the interviewees to adapt to American culture. Despite a native tendency toward a modest and understated approach, those interviewees who expressed an awareness of the difference in American and Danish persuasion seemed prepared to accept such a difference and adapt sales tactics to it. The tendency on the part of the interviewees to turn to American communications professionals and agencies also indicates a willingness to adapt to the cultural and market conditions of America.

Although the lack of motivation on the part of the interviewees to conduct sales and create marketing materials may indicate an inability to communicate effectively on the American market, Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) components of perceived competence indicate that the communication efforts on the part of the Danish IT companies can be successful for those interviewees who are able to identify the need for a more aggressive, targeted sales message and who will choose an American sales representative to deliver it.

Intercultural Adaptation Theory. Four of Ellingsworth's (1988) propositions from the adaptive intercultural communication theory were included in the literature review in the hope that these propositions could be used to gauge the effectiveness of the

Danish IT communication efforts. As such, this goal proved to be an over-extension of the theory, but the evidence from the interview data does come to bear on some of the propositions themselves.

Ellingsworth's (1988) first proposition reads: An increase in amount of functional adaptive behavior will be accompanied by accelerated progress toward task completion. To the degree that the Danish IT companies are achieving reasonable success having constructed communication messages that are more targeted and aggressive, this proposition is true. However, there is not sufficient evidence to test this proposition. The companies interviewed did not appear to have measurement tools in place for gauging the success of their communications.

The second proposition reads: A shift from inequity toward parity in adaptive behavior will accelerate progress toward task completion. By hiring American communication professionals, the Danish IT companies are clearly attempting to create parity with their American audience and accelerate their progress toward task completion. Interviewees clearly perceived a need for parity. However, there is not sufficient evidence that parity has been reached.

The third proposition reads: When interaction reveals that only one person will benefit from task completion, that person will accelerate adaptive behavior. In this case, evidence from the interviews does seem to substantiate this proposition. The Danish IT companies clearly stand the most to gain by conducting sales in the American market. Their willingness to adapt to the American market and adopt marketing messages that are

culturally different as well as their recruitment of American communication professionals indicates an accelerated adaptive behavior.

The fourth proposition reads: The more adaptation displayed by a participant, the more change that will occur in that person's perception of self and the culture he or she represents. There are no indications from the interview data that those individuals interviewed have experienced a change in their perception of self and culture.

In conclusion, the data from the interview evidence indicates that adaptation in communication on the part of the Danish IT companies interviewed in this study has taken place, both for cultural and market differences. Gudykunst and Kim's (1997) approach to intercultural communication indicates that these adaptations will likely prove to be effective. Evidence from the interview data suggests that the interviewees feel that these adaptations are proving effective, although there is no evidence in the interviews that these adaptations can ensure effective communication.

Research Question Three

What kinds of communication strategies and tactics have Danish IT companies been using in the United States and what has been the result?

Analysis: First Stage

The first stage of analysis for question three consisted of the simple analysis of data and interview utterances. The first research question dealt with the nature of cultural differences between the United States and Denmark. The second research question dealt

with the adaptations Danish IT companies had made for cultural differences as well as market differences. The third research question will be looking at the communication strategies and tactics of Danish IT companies in the United States.

Analysis: Second Stage

Analysis in the second stage reveals that some of the general observations on the part of interviewees point to communication challenges that did not surface in the previous research questions.

Analysis: Third Stage

As was done with the first and second research question, the third stage of analysis will attempt to identify the patterns associated with the communication strategies of the Danish IT companies in this study.

When the Danish IT professionals contacted for this research were asked about the communication strategy in place at their organization, a clear pattern began to emerge. The companies appeared to rely to a large degree on direct sales, trade shows, and cold calling to market their products, which instigated numerous observations on networking. Thomas Jensen noted: "A network is important for a little company, more important than it is in Europe, because the market is so big. You've got to have a little something up your sleeve to talk with the right people." Brian Haltrup explained: "It is incredibly difficult to win a customer segment. The idea of packing your little suitcase and coming over to do business, that's the hard way. You've got to establish a network

and go after a specific market segment.” Peter Jensen observed: “Networking is dominant in the United States. In Denmark, if one has a product one would like to present, one can call the company and set up a meeting. In the United States, opening the door is much more dependent on who one knows.” As such, cold calling in the United States seemed to present a challenge for the some of the interviewees. Jakob Søndergaard noted: “When one calls potential customers in the United States, one can hardly get through the first showstopper—voicemail. It is much easier to come in contact with people in Denmark. It is really difficult in America to get the first contact. Voicemail is always the first fencing.” Poul Ørting observed as well: “Danish business is much more transparent and easier to break into than in the United States. You can identify and call up a senior VP and get him or her on the phone on the first try. In the United States, everyone uses voicemail, secretaries screen calls.” Interviewees also observed that this increased the length of their sales cycle in the United States. Harkening to the earlier discussion on incorporating an American into a Danish IT company, some interviewees noted that one could mitigate the effects of the American networking and voicemail culture by hiring an American salesperson or manager with a well developed network.

Another pattern, and challenge, that emerges from the interview data are observations on the part of some interviewees that it is a difficult struggle to build a brand name in the United States. Henrik Jørgensen noted: “The biggest challenge is that no one knows you, when you come from Denmark. If you have a development center in Copenhagen, instead of Boston, then it is a challenge that people generally don’t know

Denmark.” Rud Axedahl said: “You can be a market leader in Denmark or Scandinavia, but experience competition in the United States that is incredibly tough. No one knows who you are or where Denmark is.” “People don’t know Denmark,” said Poul Ørting, “and they don’t care. They want to see an American endorsement.” Paul Erik Hansen observed: “It is very difficult to become accepted as a distributor as a little Danish company with a small organization.”

The interview data also seems to indicate that the Danish IT companies under study in this research used marketing communication in a very limited fashion. Peter Dalgaard noted: “The size of the market means that one must use a very different message for getting a message out. We can’t just put an announcement in the Wall Street Journal, as we would with [the leading Danish Financial]. The Danish market is much more manageable and the cost for this type of advertising is much less. Over here mass marketing can only take place on our website.” Søren Andersen said: “The United States is a very marketing intensive society and it is really tough to get through to the customer. One must either use a little ingenuity or a lot of money. We prefer ingenuity. This means keeping an eye open for opportunities.” Christian Feldborg said similarly: “We tried advertising and PR, but it isn’t the most effective in our sales situation. Trade magazines will write about you, but it seems like you really need to place an advertisement first. PR costs money, so we take more of a guerilla warfare approach. We are opportunists and we go in where we have a chance.” Public relations, when it was used, often took the form of one-way communication models. “Public relations is just a part of our marketing communication,” explained Søren Andersen. Peter Jensen

explained: “We used an American PR firm to create some publicity and generate some contact to the big analysis bureaus such as the Garter Group and IDC.” “PR is important in the United States,” observed Jakob Søndergaard, “Awards, such as top 5 ranking, best in industry, etc. have a lot of value.”

This concludes the general patterns with respect to the challenges Danish IT companies faced executing communication strategies based primarily on direct sales, tradeshow, networking, and cold calling and secondarily on advertising and public relations.

Analysis: Fourth Stage

The interview data reveals a number of themes concerning the communication strategies and tactics used by Danish IT companies, which follow here.

Communication efforts on the part of Danish IT companies operating in the United States were often based upon direct sales, tradeshow, networking, and cold calling. The experience of some interviewees seems to suggest that it is more difficult getting through to target customers and clients than it typically would be in Denmark. The use of voice mail in the United States seemed to produce a barrier to which they were not accustomed.

Establishing brand or name recognition also seemed to be a challenge for Danish IT companies starting up in the United States. Having an established brand in Denmark did not seem to ease the transition to the United States. These observations also reflect upon the earlier discussion on American companies' reticence toward foreign firms.

Finally, many of the Danish companies, by their own admission, did not use extensive marketing communication functions, such as advertising and public relations. The cost of carrying out a communication campaign proved to be prohibitive according to the interviewees. Thus these companies appeared to apply their communication tactics in an infrequent manner and in an opportunistic way. When these companies did use public relations tactics it generally was outsourced to an agency or done in house by a general communications manager. Interview data indicates that use of public relations was restricted to one-way models of public relations.

Analysis: Fifth Stage

Although the data gathered under Research Question Three does not open itself to analysis through the theoretical literature on cultural variability and intercultural communication, it will figure prominently in the discussion concerning prospective public relations efforts on the part of Danish IT companies.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Research Question Four

Given the initial research, what are the implications for prospective public relations efforts on the part of Danish IT organizations in the United States?

Having reviewed the research results, this thesis now turns toward a discussion concerning the effects current Danish IT communication practices may have on prospective public relations efforts. Using the research results and current public relations theories, this thesis attempts to draw some meaningful conclusions regarding the final research question.

As explained earlier, the research indicates that Danish IT communication in the United States is affected by cultural differences, most notably a difference in persuasive communication. The research also indicates that the cultural differences described by the Danish IT professionals interviewed for this study seem to verify that the Danish culture is typically oriented toward horizontal individualism, low power distance, and feminine values such as consensus and collaboration. Sriramesh and White (1992) postulated that cultures displaying such values as these would have a greater tendency toward developing excellent public relations practices, that is, two-way models of public relations communication and preferably symmetrical two-way models of public relations.

However, there are no indications in this research that such a postulation is true. This lack of evidence may result from Danish IT companies' use of American agencies and American communication professionals, for as Vasquez and Taylor (1999) pointed out in their research, American practitioners rely upon one-way public relations methods to communicate to target publics. Danish reliance on one-way public relations models may also indicate that the switch from one-way models of public relations to two-way models of public relations is more difficult than Sriramesh and White (1992) and Grunig et al. (1992) anticipated it to be, even in cultures such as the United States, which, theoretically speaking, ought to be conducive to two-way methods of communication. Sriramesh and White (1992) postulated as well that excellent public relations could be practiced in a high power distance authoritarian society provided the power holders had personal tendencies toward low power distance and feminine values. This thesis research and the research of Vasquez and Taylor (1999) appear to indicate that neither the surrounding environment nor the cultural tendencies of the practitioners intuitively leads to the practice of two-way models of public relations. Indeed, even moderately hierarchical and masculine cultures such as the United States may hinder the implementation excellent public relations practices.

Verčič et al. (1996) argued that there are generic principles of public relations that allow for the global practice of excellent public relations. According to the theoretical propositions set out by Verčič et al. (1996), excellent public relations would be characterized by two-way symmetrical models of public relations, the representation of public relations practitioners on the management team, and practitioners with real

positions of influence in an independent management function. The research evidence indicates that Danish IT companies in this study are not practicing the global principles of excellent public relations. Danish IT companies typically outsourced the public relations function or the function fell to a general communication manager and typically under marketing communications. Interviewees also described a use of public relations that relied primarily upon the one-way methods of public relations communication. Both Grunig et al. (1992) and Vasquez and Taylor (1999) suggested that the United States constitutes an environment conducive to the practice of two-way models of public relations, and this study's research on intercultural competence indicates that Danish IT professionals are knowledgeable of cultural differences and are prepared to adapt to cultural and market differences. However, the failure to apply generic global principles of public relations by Danish IT companies seems to indicate either a lack of awareness or lack of acceptance of the two-way models of public relations and the corresponding principles of excellence laid out by Verčič et al. (1996).

Zaharna (2001), in her "in-awareness" approach to public relations, recommended constructing a country profile and a cultural profile prior to conducting public relations in a foreign country. Taking the literature review and the interview research into consideration, this thesis has taken significant steps toward developing a country and cultural profile concerning the differences between Denmark and the United States. When constructing a country profile, it would behoove the public relations practitioner to recognize, as this research indicates, that because of the size of the U.S. market and level of competition, the U.S. market is much more segmented than the Danish market, which

necessitates messages that are much more narrow and targeted than such messages typically are in Denmark. One might also note that the mass media is ever present in American society: there is more message competition and therefore greater message dissonance on the American market than in Denmark. According to this research, when constructing a cultural profile, there are several cultural conditions that public relations practitioners might do well to take into consideration. This research indicates that the American culture is somewhat more hierarchical with greater power distances than Danish culture and less consensus oriented than the Danish culture. The research also indicates that the United States is culturally more masculine than Danish culture and that there is more emphasis placed on achievement values than the quality of life values traditionally emphasized in Denmark.

Turning then toward a communication profile for Danish IT companies operating in the United States, the country and culture profiles may affect public relations efforts in several ways. When conducting verbal communication, creating visual communication, and making persuasive appeals, this research indicates that a public relations practitioner must be prepared for an audience that expects assertive, confident—sometimes even embellished—appeals. In the vertically individualistic culture of the United States, people have grown accustomed to hearing bold claims of excellence, which seem to convey strength and confidence. The Danish rhetorical style based on modest appeals and conciliatory approaches may not strike target audiences in the United States as reassuring and may even strike some as weak. Even so, it should be noted as well that many of these observations were made in sales and marketing situations and may not

affect public relations communication in precisely the same way. Further, while the United States has traditionally been a mass advertising and mass communication culture, this research indicates that the communication matrix for Danish IT companies in the United States may be considerably more dependent on interpersonal communication, such as networking and direct sales, which suggests that a corresponding public relations strategy will also be more focused on creating and sustaining interpersonal relationships. One has to wonder, of course, if such a strategy can be reconciled with the reality of practicing public relations in the United States.

As Vasquez and Taylor (1999) revealed in their research, American public relations practitioners typically practice one-way methods of public relations, such as press agency and public information models, and this thesis research has revealed that the Danish IT companies are doing much the same. Public relations is being primarily used as an extension of Danish IT marketing communication efforts, that is, as a tool for creating awareness about their *products*. So long as Danish IT companies or their agencies are using these models toward this goal, their communications will undoubtedly require aggressive publicity tactics and assertive messages of persuasion. Indeed, their own experiences have told the interviewees that this is what American business and customers expect, and their adaptation to this style of communication undoubtedly stems from the desire for sales and success. Nonetheless, it might be noted that this may simply be the nature of *sales and marketing communication* in the United States.

The goal of creating product awareness and the Danish use of one-way public relations models, however, do not necessarily address the *de facto* communication

challenges facing Danish IT companies in the United States. The Danish IT professionals interviewed for this research described a society and culture in the United States that is much more dependent on networking and name-dropping than is the case in Denmark. Some interviewees even expressed difficulties getting past the target companies' sentinels: secretaries and voice mail systems. When interviewees were able to get past such first-line defenses, they expressed difficulties garnering acceptance among American customers and business partners, despite the fact that Denmark is a western culture with a degree of social, technical, and educational sophistication that arguably equals the United States. Interviewees explained that operating in America required looking American. Similarly, as small foreign companies, Danish IT businesses also struggled to build name and brand recognition on the market.

As the interviewees indicated, there is little to be gained for Danish IT companies by relying on mass marketing strategies or a broad approach to the market: advertising is too expensive and customer segments are too narrow for this kind of marketing to be effective. IT products will typically be sold through direct sales. Still, public relations appears to be viewed as a cheaper avenue toward creating the kind of product awareness Danish IT companies would like to have in the absence of effective advertising. The communication challenges reviewed in the preceding paragraph, though, describe challenges that seem to be primarily based in the relationships, or lack thereof, that Danish IT companies have with their target publics. Their communication challenges seem to stem from a lack of understanding and acceptance, cultural or otherwise. Rather than using public relations to create publicity about their products, it seems that Danish

IT companies would be better served using two-way symmetrical public relations to bridge some of the cultural gaps and market differences they are experiencing in the United States. These companies stand to gain more by using public relations to establish the kind of rapport that will allow them to break through the American voicemail culture and assuage American standoffishness.

The research seems to indicate that Danish IT professionals have accurately accessed the American psyche that influences the sales process, but that some still struggle in getting to the bargaining table, garnering acceptance, and gaining recognition. The public relations theories reviewed in the literature review suggest that public relations might be better equipped for dealing with these challenges than traditional marketing communications. Moreover, the theories suggest, and this research seems to lend support to the notion, that Danish culture may be better suited to apply the general principles of global public relations that facilitate understanding and communication. Executing a two-way symmetrical model of public relations is aided by many of the character traits that seem to be more culturally ingrained in the Danish IT professionals than in some of their American counterparts. While these characteristics do not lead to the intuitive application of two-way, symmetrical communication, the existence of consensus tendencies, for example, may facilitate and expedite the practice of excellent public relations. As a result, a public relations strategy based on two-way symmetrical communication might provide the advantage Danish IT companies need for cracking the tough American market place.

Finally, given the overhead costs that are a constant concern for these nascent Danish IT companies, it might also be advantageous for some companies to replace the general communication manager position/marketing manager position with a public relations management function. Naysayers might argue that this is the obvious and constant conclusion drawn by public relations practitioners and public relations advocates. Such critics might further argue that use of the excellent public relations theories always lead a researcher to the conclusion that a research subject would be better served by implementing a two-way symmetrical public relations model. However, the conclusion of this thesis research is based upon, *first*, the interviewees' own admission that mass marketing and advertising are largely inadequate for reaching their target customers and target publics, and, *second*, the nature of the communication challenges facing Danish IT companies, which seem more closely related to the relations companies have with their publics rather than the persuasive messages they would like their customers to accept.

Important Findings

This research was able to verify some of the cultural differences defined by Hofstede (1984, 2001), Triandis (1995), and Nelson and Shavitt (2002) in the context of Danish IT companies operating and communicating in the United States. In particular, the research indicates that the Danish style of persuasive communication and the Danish cultural tendency toward consensus leadership and consensus bargaining may have significant effects on Danish IT communication efforts in the United States. At times

these cultural differences may hinder Danish IT communication efforts and at other times these cultural differences may prove advantageous, particularly concerning public relations. Consequently, the research indicates that there are clear cultural and market differences that the public relations practitioner should take into consideration when assembling a public relations strategy.

The research of Gudykunst and Kim (1997) in conjunction with the interview research indicates that the interviewees are displaying effective intercultural communication at the interpersonal sales level. However, the interview research also indicates in conjunction with the public relations theories that the Danish IT companies interviewed for this study are not addressing their de facto communication needs as adequately as perhaps they could be. Given their communication needs, this thesis finds that rather than continuing to focus their public relations efforts on product publicity, Danish IT companies might be better served by the implementation of public relations strategies and a public relations management function that will foster understanding and acceptance on the part of American customers who have proved to be rather inaccessible and wary of conducting business with Danish IT companies.

Future Research

Since the sample of interview participants was purposive in nature, the results of this study are not generalizable to a greater population. However, as an exploratory study this research has established a solid groundwork for future research. A more extensive qualitative study of Danish businesses operating in the United States in concert

with quantitative methods would lead to stronger verification of some of the themes present in this research. Some of the themes elaborated upon in this thesis may certainly affect other areas of Danish communication efforts in the United States and have similar implications for Danish public relations efforts in the United States. This research offers, then, a good idea of what kind of cultural and market differences exist between the United States and Denmark and how these differences may affect Danish communication efforts.

Another area of future research would be a study concerning the application of Grunig et al. (1992) and Verčič et al. (1996) principles of excellent and global public relations on the part of Danish IT companies in the United States. It would be very interesting indeed to see if Danish communication practitioners are culturally better suited toward the practice of two-way symmetrical public relations, as Sriramesh and White (1992) postulate they may be, and if this practice can facilitate the kind of communication and understanding that will increase the sales of Danish IT products.

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Appendix Interview Questions

Name _____
Company _____
Title _____

0) What has been your role—or your involvement—in connection with the company's communication and marketing in the USA?

Preparation

1) How did you research your target group in the USA and what did you learn about your target audience?

Objective

2) What do you want to communicate to the public about your company and its product in the USA? What is the central message?

Communication Strategy/Tactics

3) Is there a communication strategy in place for establishing contact with customers/the public in USA? Has this plan been successful?

- To what degree do you use advertising, PR, telemarketing, etc.?

Challenges

4) Is it necessary to adjust your communication efforts (strategy, tactics) for the American market?

5) Are there perceptible cultural differences between Denmark and the United States? Can these differences be described?

- Do these cultural differences affect Danish communication efforts in the United States?

6) How did you perceive Americans or America before you started communicating and marketing in the USA? Has your perception changed since then?

Conclusion

7) Is there something I have forgotten to ask about?